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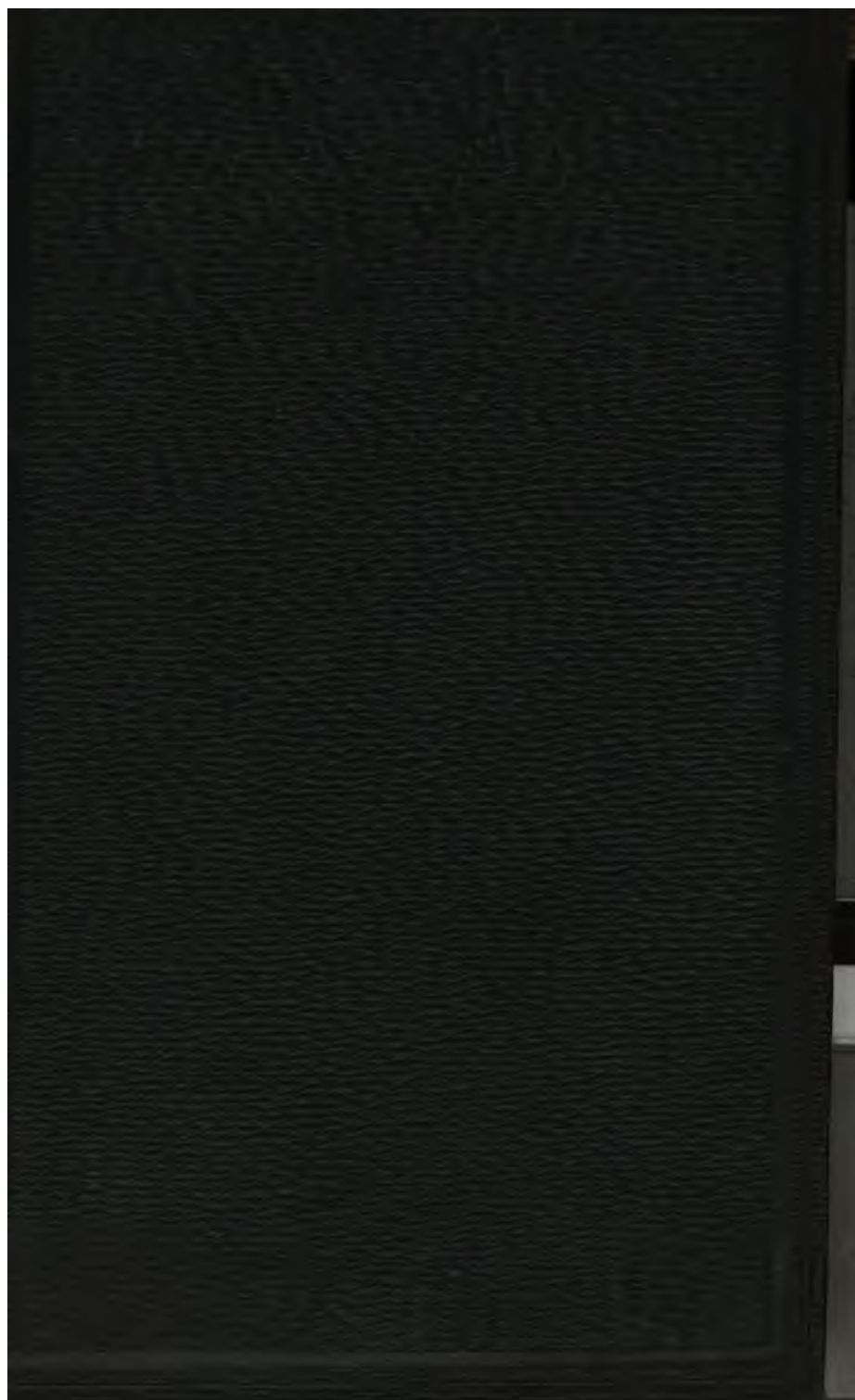
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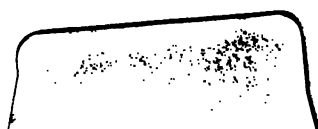
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A LIFE'S LESSONS.

BY

MRS. GORE,

AUTHOR OF

"MAMMON," "MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS," &c.

"Il y a de la poésie dans ce tableau. La vie s'y dresse avec ses haillons et ses paillettes ;—mais toute soudaine,—incomplète,—comme elle est réellement."—BALZAC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1856.

249. N. 448.



A LIFE'S LESSONS.

CHAPTER I.

NEVER had the taciturnity of her father so weighed upon the spirits of Nannie as while presiding that evening at his tea-table. But she would rather he had been altogether silent, than utter the few words he let fall.

“Did neighbour Varnham show you her son’s pictur?” he inquired, on learning that she had spent the afternoon at Hawyer’s Cottage. “I found her crying over it, the day after the lad made sail.”

His daughter replied briefly in the negative. But it grieved her that her friend should have maintained this reserve towards her ;—*her*, whom she had, nevertheless, addressed by the endearing name of daughter !

“ John Rawson and his wife had been a-thinking, this year or two past,” resumed Michael Balfour, “ to get her to take apprentice the second girl of theirs, who’s a great hand at fine work. Little Edith could have boarded with her grandfather ; and by neighbour Varnham’s teaching, might have been put in a famous way of earning her bread. In time, maybe, she might have set up a shop for herself in Ilsin’ton. The Rawsons are a large family to keep idle.”

“ And what made them alter their views, father ?”

“ Only that after what had been hinted by old Macglashan, it wouldn’t have been quite the thing for an honest man’s child to bide under her roof.”

“That was no suggestion of our dear, good David’s,” cried Nannie, eagerly. “David is too charitable and too just to condemn her on such vague accusations.”

But her eagerness served only to close the lips of her father. He had not intended to be so communicative; and from that moment, till he bestowed upon her his nightly blessing previously to retiring to rest, said not another word.

Poor Nannie! The room had seemed dull while he sat there, with half-closed eyes, sipping his tea audibly out of a tea-spoon. But after he was gone, after the tea things had been removed, and nothing was left for companionship but the grim old clock, whose tick-tack seemed to reproach her that the voice of home, which she had so often yearned after in her school-day absence from Gridlands, should have become so tedious,—she almost wished for him back again. Anything rather than that trying *tête-à-tête* with self! For self

spoke still more rebukingly to Nannie than the grim old clock. She was just beginning to ask herself whether, if she retired to bed, sleep would put an end to the throbbing of her temples and throbbing of her heart, when a loud tap on the window shutters of the parlour, which closed from without, startled her from her reverie. After a moment's alarm, convinced that the sound was the coinage of her own somewhat disturbed imagination, she again leaned her aching brow upon her hand, and endeavoured to re-collect her scattered thoughts, of long sea voyages, and the pains and penalties of life in Bengal; when a second tap, still louder than the first, satisfied her she was not mistaken. A little flurried—for the hour was late, and the house detached from the village—she was half inclined to wake up her father. For the present, however, she contented herself with desiring Dinah to call in one of the men, who was still astir in the cow-yard, to unbar the house

door, and ascertain the object and quality of this mysterious visitor.

But her commission was probably overheard from without ; for, as she crossed the little hall, the reiterated sound of her own name arrested her steps and enlightened her mind. With a joyful cry of "Elisha!" she instantly rushed forward to unfasten the bolts, and herself admit him into the house.

Yes, it was indeed her cousin who met her view as she opened the door ; and partly under the excitement of relief from terror, and partly from the comfort of finding a companion for her loneliness, she folded him in her arms, and kissed him with a sister's greeting.

"I am so glad, so *very* glad, you are come!" cried she, after issuing orders to provide for his refreshment. "But why steal upon us thus?"

"I dismissed the chaise in the village. I was afraid of alarming my uncle by so late a visit."

"It was only your cousin you were not afraid of frightening to death!"

"I am very weary," was all he could reply to her challenge—"I have been on the road since yesterday."

"But why so much haste?" she inquired, after carefully installing him in his favourite chair, and preparing some tea to his liking—"and why did not aunt Dorthy accompany you?"

"It would have caused delay. And it was essential to me to obtain an early answer to a question I want to ask you."

Nannie's heart sank within her. Did this question originate in information which he might have received from their common guardian?

"Ask it, then," said she, endeavouring to smile, "since your curiosity is so pressing."

"Not till I have rested a while," replied Ely, pressing his hand upon his heart, as she had often seen him do, in earlier years, when

suffering from attacks of pain. Yet he did not look ill. His health and strength had accomplished wonderful progress since their last meeting. The slender boy, though still slender, had grown tall and manly-looking; and though the lineaments of his face were still as delicate and his complexion as transparent as a woman's, the fair hair, brushed-back from his fine forehead, developed the expression of his intellectual countenance.

"Wait, then, till to-morrow, dearest Ely," said Nannie, cordially extending her hand. "There can be no such vast hurry. You cannot leave us again to-morrow? You will at least spend a few days at Gridlands. Your presence will be such a comfort—such a *great* comfort to me."

Thus entreated, it was not likely he should persist in the intention with which he had entered the house. He had, in fact, already desired the postboy to return for him on the morrow at noon.

"If I find that some business I have to transact in London can be accomplished by letter," said Elisha, fondly pressing her offered hand, "I may be able to pass a few days with you—and my uncle."

"Thanks, thanks ! But what is all this of business in London ? Are you becoming so great as well as so learned a man, cousin, that nothing short of London will content you ? Do you remember how often we used to sit together at sunset on the shore, at Blackpool, wondering whether you would ever grow strong enough for journeys and voyages, that we might see the world together ?"

"Perhaps it was *that* hope which strengthened my frame, Nannie," he replied. "I am a different being now. That close warehouse at Manchester, and that stifling, smoky atmosphere, checked the very life within me. Clifton has altered my nature."

"It has not altered your voice, dear Ely. It seems so pleasant to hear it again. I have.

been much among strangers lately. This is my first day at home; and home and you together, seem such a natural combination!"

They soon fell into family discussions, as though they had never parted: each unconscious that, at *their* age, those who part for any length of time, cannot meet again. Time works such transformations! In *their* case the expanded intellect of one, the aroused vigour of the other, had extinguished the simple Nannie and sickly Elisha of Manchester.

They soon fell to commenting upon the books sent her by her cousin—that memorable birthday present; and a thousand little topics were discussed between them, till Martha, whose yawns had long been audible from her retreat, brought in bed-candles, with the significant intimation that Mr. Hildyard's room was ready, and that, as the night was cold, there was a good fire a-glow in the grate. The cousins had not perceived that the small hours were

come, or that they had sat out the one by which they had been seated.

That night, exhausted as he was by his long journey, young Hildyard could not close his eyes. Hour after hour, he lay awake—his mind dazzled by visions of love and joy. The tender reception bestowed on him by his cousin, her obvious delight at his unexpected arrival, seemed to express sentiments towards him of which, at his last sojourn at Gridlands, he had sometimes doubted the existence or the possibility. He had even fancied, at times, that she regarded him with the same humiliating pity which had so often galled him during his infirm childhood. But now, she seemed to love him as much—*almost* as much as he loved *her*!

Never had he fancied her half so beautiful as when, on the sudden lapsing of her fears at his arrival, she sprang to his neck and bade him welcome. By that hearth-side where they had been sitting together, as in their child-

hood, hand in hand, the loveliness of her flushed cheek, and the kindly feelings beaming from her eyes, had kindled unearthly rapture in his own. It was almost morning before he slept.

Daylight creeping through the curtains, and steps upon the gravel walk beneath his window, warned him that it was time to be astir; and up he started, expecting that the early riser by whom he had been disturbed would prove his uncle, proceeding to enjoy his morning pipe under the lime-trees.

A glance from his window not only convinced him of his mistake, but filled him with consternation. Thoroughly at home, with a cigar in his mouth, and attired in one of those fanciful shooting-dresses which Highland sports first brought into vogue, but which have been caricatured on the continent, (on the plea that the greater the eccentricity, the stronger the proof that the wearer is accustomed to sport on his own territories, and defy remark), saun-

tered Léonce de Lanville ; his slouched beaver and pointed beard imparting a Rubens-like character to his handsome head.

In this singular figure, young Hildyard had little difficulty in recognising one of the new inhabitants of Hawkshill ; of whom, and of Nannie's intimacy with them, he had heard only too much from Jakes Zelters. But that he should be already thus intimately installed at Gridlands ! That he should be cutting off with his riding-whip so uncere- moniously the heads of Nannie's favourite carnations !

What business had he there at such a time ?

Before Elisha had in any degree recovered his astonishment, or half completed his toilet,—and how homely appeared his own garments compared with the gay plumage of the foreign bird strutting below,—his uncle was in the room.

“Nannie wouldn't have me disturbed last night, lad, to bid thee welcome,” said the

farmer; "and this morning I wouldn't have *her* disturb *thee* till thou hadst slept thy sleep out. But bustle about now, Ely! I've a sight to show thee below."

"I have seen it," replied his nephew, with something of a derisive smile upon his lips.

"It seems that the poor lady at Hawkshill is growing worse and worse, and she and her sister won't hear of less than getting Nannie back among them again. So they've sent their brother and one of their saddle horses to fetch her. Such a first-rate beauty as 'tis! Come down to the stables, Ely, and have a look at it. In one of my rough stalls, among my rough nags, she looks like a queen in a satin gown!"

Young Hildyard was a little relieved to find that it was with Mademoiselle de Lanville's high-bred mare, and not Mademoiselle de Lanville's high-bred brother, that his uncle had proposed to dazzle his eyes.

"And when does Nannie start? Shall I

see her before she goes?" he inquired in an embarrassed voice.

"Goes *where*, lad? She's only busy writing a bit of a note to explain to her foreign friends, that she can't leave home—that thou'rt here along with us."

"I should be sorry that my visit placed any restraint on her inclination," said Ely, stiffly.

"But her inclination is to stay at home. I heard her say as much to that young foreign chap, the moment he explained the object of his coming.—I didn't rightly understand their jabber. But I could hear by his tone that he was beseeching and remonstrating. And when he found 'twas no mortal use, off he went into the garden in a huff, while Nannie betook herself to her desk; and I see he's making sad havoc among the flowers, for pure spite and vexation."

Welcome was this intelligence to Elisha: still more welcome the sound of horses' hoofs

on the Hawkshill road, followed by the hurried trot of the well-mounted groom, and the beautiful Zerlina he was leading, which had to keep up with his angry pace. But more acceptable would it have been not to have found him at all within the sanctuary of Gridlands. While working out his probation at a distance, that quiet spot had always appeared to him such hallowed ground, so safe a retreat ! To him, his sweet and innocent cousin appeared an especial gift of providence, conceded to be the crowning blessing of his once valueless life ; and he could not bear to have her even gazed upon by eyes profane.

On rejoining her at the breakfast table, he found her even more gracious, and thought her even more lovely, than on the preceding night. But with a lover's jealous instinct, he could not help attributing the archness which, for a moment, laughed in her hazel eyes, to something connected with her recent interview.

“ You are right,” said she, frankly, when he taxed her with her scarcely repressed mirth. —“ I *am* amused at having countermined a mine ! They wanted me back at Hawkshill, and could think of no better plea than to pretend that Madame van der Helde, being worse, was constantly asking for me. Whereas a little foot-messenger who leaves Hawkshill for Middledale every morning at day-break, to gather mushrooms for the French cook, brought me tidings, this morning, of her very great amendment, half an hour before Léonce made his appearance. His diplomacy was consequently defeated.”

“ Léonce ! ” — Cousin Ely, so proud whenever she called him by his Christian name, was grieved at hearing so precious a privilege lavished on a stranger.

“ A mount on Zerlina, too, was a bribe which Monsieur de Lanville evidently thought irresistible. But I had promised myself to you and Brownie, this morning, dearest cousin,

and if you have finished breakfast, I am now at your service."

The farmer had left them to their tardy meal. His men were busy with their last day's potato-digging, and he was anxious to keep an eye on the crop.

Down the nut-walk, therefore, sauntered the cousins. Within doors, Nannie was too much intruded upon by Martha with questions concerning the household interests of Gridlands, to be secure from interruption. Under the lime-trees, they should be more at ease for conversation.

"I want to ask you a question, Nannie, which you alone can answer," said Elisha Hildyard, abruptly, as soon as they had established themselves in the accustomed seat of Michael and the Pairson: Sancho, the favourite old dog of poor Mrs. Balfour, having established himself in the shade at their feet. "I want you to tell me whether, in the happy

days awaiting our married life, it would afford you gratification to become the mistress of Hawkshill, in place of the residence in one of our southern counties which it is at present my intention to purchase?"

"Of Hawkshill?" exclaimed Nannie, in dismay. The allusion to her future destinies being secondary at that moment, in her mind, to this sudden announcement of the dislodgments of her friends.

"The state of the case is this," continued Elisha, endeavouring to appear composed. "The fortune left by my father, is far more considerable—four times more considerable—than the one we equally inherit. He was at once a speculative and a careful man; nor did my thrifty mother ever diminish his substance by the outlay of a penny. On your account, I rejoice at this; for they have provided nobly for their successors."

Nannie was beginning to feel distressed—almost angry. She hated these allusions to

mercenary interests. But her cousin chose to be heard.

“I need not tell you,” he said, “that prior to entering into trade on his own account, my father was a clerk in the counting-house of Zelters and Company. In their hands, consequently, he deposited his gains, as the world prospered with him ; and by them, those funds have been prudently invested. When, therefore, the estate of Hawkshill came recently into the market, old Jakes bethought himself of his clients. Finding there was some probability that the house with which our family has been more than a century connected, was likely to be sold under its value in order to be razed to the ground, it struck him that Dorty Hildyard and her son might wish to become the purchasers, and wrote to give us the refusal.”

“You — aunt Dorty — the purchasers of Hawkshill !” exclaimed Nannie, aghast at

what, against her better reason, she considered a sacrilege.

“Why not? We are able, not alone to make the purchase, but to reside there as becomes the place,” said Elisha, his usual meekness expanding for a moment into self-assertion as he discovered her misgivings. “My mother, biassed by the attachments of her youth, is willing to make the acquisition, in order to preserve from destruction the house endeared by early associations. But it is *your* word, my heart’s darling, that must decide. If you prefer that quaint old place, it shall be ours. If, on the contrary, you are tempted by a more cheerful neighbourhood, and a residence rendered more commodious by modern inventions and more sightly by modern taste, we will either buy or build elsewhere; and Zelters and Son can sign and seal with Lord Mardyke.”

“I should be thankful to have you and aunt Dorthy established at Hawkshill,” replied

Nannie, evasively; "and I doubt not that she would be happier in returning to the haunts of her youth, than in taking possession of the finest castle in the land."

"But it is not of her inclinations we are talking, it is of *yours*," persisted Elisha, vexed at what seemed almost an obstinate or affected obtuseness on the part of his cousin.

"*My* inclinations, then,—can you doubt it? are decidedly in favour of the purchase. If the place must pass out of possession of the family who for more than a century and a half have called it their own, better far that it should be into yours, than that of a dissolute nobleman, who regards it only as an investment."

"Still, you do not answer me, Nannie," said Elisha, as peevishly as was compatible with his gentle nature. "Should you, dearest, be personally gratified by the purchase?"

"Unquestionably," she replied, perceiving

that he was annoyed by her seeming unconcern. "How could I be otherwise! I am friendless here, as regards companions of my own age. Think how it would improve the dreariness of our life at Gridlands, to have you both so near me. Aunt Dorty, so kind and considerate to my poor father: you, cousin, so gentle, so forbearing with myself, Only seven miles apart! How we should read together, how consult over our reading! What a ready interchange of books, and thoughts, and feelings!—No further fear of loneliness!—No more despondency!—Elisha always at hand to enlighten and console. Yes, dear cousin! Accept Mr. Zelter's offer. I am far too selfish not to wish you would settle at Hawkshill."

"But not alone, 'Nannie. Unless you were with me — my bride, my wife — what would Hawkshill, or any other place, be to me."

"Do not set your heart on impossibilities,

dear Ely," answered Miss Balfour, turning, with fear and trembling, from his earnest gaze. "So long as my father lives, I will never quit Gridlands."

"But my uncle is old and infirm. He might be induced to quit his farm."

"Not by me. I have no wish to desert the home of my childhood," said Nannie, almost with a shudder; for she saw that the long-dreaded explanation was at hand.

"And can you, to indulge this selfish prejudice, reject the entreaties, the prayers, of one whom you generously admit to be so dear to you?" cried young Hildyard, again seizing her hand.

"Dear as a brother; dear as an esteemed and valued brother; dear as Léonce de Lanville is to Eugénie and Clémence."

"A young girl's maidenly scruple!" interrupted her cousin. "With such love, I am more than content."

"No,"—faltered Nannie,—feeling that she

owed it to herself and him to be explicit. "Not when you know that another holds a higher place in my affections."

"Another?"—exclaimed her cousin, starting to his feet. "Do you mean to say, Nannie, that a stranger has superseded me in your heart?"—

An expressive silence was her reply.

"The coxcomb of this morning, perhaps!" cried he, gasping for breath.

"Monsieur de Lanville—the acquaintance of a month?" exclaimed Nannie, with indignation. "No; one whom, like yourself, dear Ely, I have known from childhood; for whom my regard has grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength."

"Maurice Varnham!" was the scarcely articulate ejaculation of the heart-broken young man.

"Yes! *Maurice*,—whom I shall perhaps never behold again. It is to you only, my cousin, my friend, that I have confided, or

ever will confide, the weakness of my heart. But it is a prepossession I shall never shake off. It is a prepossession I shall carry to the grave!"

CHAPTER II.

WHEN, the following spring, the first blow of the hammer was given towards the demolition of Hawkshill, the working population of the district—a sparse and uncultivated race—raised a feeble “hurrah!” moved, not alone by the love of destruction so prevalent in rude nature, but, according to their own statement, because “the estate now belonged to a true British nobleman, and because the frog-eating French folks were druv out of the land.”

At that epoch, a detestation of “frog-eating French folks” was still inculcated as a virtue; if not precisely from the pulpit, certainly

from the hustings ; and all persons speaking a foreign tongue, were “ frog-eating French folk,” in the eyes of the mob.

Their Dutch neighbours at Hawkshill had become, as it were, naturalised among them ; had adopted their language, and exhibited their complexion ; were good Protestants, and good housewives. Royal intermarriages, too, have, time immemorial, rendered England and Holland affectionate neighbours. But every Middledale quarrier who had recently encountered on the highway that laughing cavalcade of joyous strangers, with their well-groomed horses and flowing plumes, and been made to scramble aside into the ditch by the haughty caracoling of Léonce de Lanville’s beautiful barb, was rejoiced to hear that Hawkshill had changed hands ; and that a building firm at Preston had purchased, and agreed to cart away within a month, the materials of the old house.

In point of fact, no one had any cause for

regret on the occasion ; gentle or simple, antiquarian or novelty-monger. By especial clause in the sale, the family pictures and books, and the gracious gifts of King William, of immortal memory, were reserved as heirloom, and shipped at Fleetwood for Schevening, in a barque inscribed, on its capacious stern, with the names of Van der Helde and Co. The furniture had been already disposed of by auction ; and every trace of the past was gradually disappearing from the spot. A considerable allotment of timber was marked for the ensuing fall ; and when summer and its roses made their appearance, nothing remained of the old Dutch mansion, except unerasable traces of the flower-garden upstarting with officious bloom, among heaps of rubbish and broken bricks, fragments of decayed wood and scatterings of rusty iron.

New keepers, on the other hand, were seen perambulating the estate. Old tenants had received notice to quit ; and among those who

remained, an untold number of pheasants' eggs had been distributed. It was made incumbent on them to rear game for their new landlord, as carefully as they had been heretofore accustomed to bring up their children.

Michael Balfour, little aware that he had been on the point of seeing his own nephew established at the old place, looked on with the unconcern which grows on apathetic natures with increasing years. He was, perhaps, secretly rejoiced at the hasty departure of the foreigner. The young gentleman in the slouched beaver and marvellous plaid, had rendered him somewhat distrustful of Nannie's repeated visits to Hawkshill. As to the old house, he observed to David Hurdis, he all but hated it, as having given the death-blow of his poor missus.—“Better that the whole lot should pass away altogether !”

Jakes Zelters, meanwhile, who had come down to preside over the removal from the premises of the pictures, tapestry, and antique

delf, tacitly applauded his philosophy. Even to him, no motive had been assigned by young Hildyard for his rejection of a purchase so advantageous. But though grieved by the vexatious origin of the alienation of the property, he was not sorry to be spared all further trouble with the agency. He was old, and he was rich; and no stipend could repay him for the annoyance of periodically quitting his business and his villa at Stockwell, to squabble with Scotch bailiffs and Lancashire farmers, audit incomprehensible accounts, and contract severe fits of rheumatism in the antiquated ghost-hole. When the milkedewed ancestors turned their faces towards the Hague, and the Lanvilles towards the Ardennes, he felt greatly relieved.

His farewell to his ward at Gridlands was all but paternal.

"God be with you, my child," said he. "Your old friend will return hither no more. But should he survive your father, Nannie, look

upon him as a parent. Till then, my good girl, do your duty by the author of your days. In my country originated—and I am proud of it—the ‘Law of the Stork.’ At some future time, since neither of you seems inclined to hear of it at present, may a happy marriage with your cousin fulfil the hopes and expectations of those whose fine fortune you inherit.”

From him, too, she learned that Lucas van der Helde had consented to extricate his son from the difficulties into which he had so gratuitously and disgracefully plunged himself, on condition of his becoming, in fact as well as name, a Dutchman ; renouncing Brussels and Paris, and investing that portion of the purchase-money of Hawkshill, left unabsorbed by lordly birds of prey, in some industrial undertaking, to which he might contribute his superintendence as well as his capital. The King of the Netherlands was just then setting the example of such speculations. The furnaces of

Séraing were blazing under royal authority ; and the old Dutchman decreed, on the score of his liberal concession, that the expected heir of his house should be born on the brink of a canal, and his only son devote his leisure and faculties to more lucrative arithmetic than that of the betting-book.

The Hildyards returned no more to Gridlands. There was every pretext for absenting themselves, for Dorty was now too infirm for so long a journey ; and when the news reached her of the demolition of Hawkshill, it was as if the Neapolitans were suddenly to learn that Vesuvius had sunk into the earth. Elisha continued to address to his cousin, at regular intervals, tidings of his own welfare, and the health of his mother ; but the intervals were *too* regular to admit of his letters being other than formal communications. He was evidently fulfilling a duty. The warmer impulses of his heart had subsided.

Michael Balfour felt too conscious that the

continuance of his household happiness depended on his daughter's sojourn under his roof, to make very pertinacious inquiries into her intentions as regarded his nephew. The only persons at Middledale who, in any degree, surmised the truth, were neighbour Varnham, now fast wasting away into the grave; and the good pastor, whose attentions to her were, through good and evil report, unintermitting as ever.

But David too well understood the nature of his young parishioner, to molest her by vexatious questions. He saw that, humbled and unhappy, the sense of duty was still paramount in her mind; that she was struggling back, if not into the right way, at least out of the wrong.

Still, it was not for one whose vocation was to instruct and exhort, not occasionally to drop good seed, as if inadvertently, by the wayside, which, he trusted, might fructify in her soul. During the long summer evenings, he more

than once joined the young girl in her saunter beside the beck,—where, the preceding year, she had wandered with Maurice by her side, watching together the evening star become gradually apparent, and at length lustrous, amidst the gathering shades of evening ; and listening to his wild assertions, that even so *he* should emerge from obscurity, and become a shining light. And never did David leave unimproved these occasions to congratulate her, that the evil genius of Hawyer's Cottage had been so providentially removed from Middledale.

“ Our poor sick neighbour is sinking apace, Nannie,” said he, one day towards the close of autumn. “ I doubt whether she'll wear through the winter. 'Twas a thoughtful kindness of your father to send her a supply of the old wine he purchased out of the Hawkshill cellar.”

“ Dr. Moss informed us that she required stimulants. The Hawkshill Madeira was said

to be half a century old. My poor mother accounted it an infallible cordial."

"If it weren't for Gridlands, Nannie, I'm afraid even the staff of life might be lacking to our poor neighbour, as well as its luxuries. Edith told me t'other day, at Ilsin'ton, that since her son's departure, her needlework had been scarce worth the selling. Her eyesight is failing her. Weeping, may be, and watching! Sleepless nights and scalding tears are no salve to the eyeball."

"No fear, however, of neighbour Varnham's ever coming to want," answered Miss Balfour, endeavouring to speak cheerfully. "Tell Mrs. Rawson, when you see her again, to give herself no trouble about disposing of the work. I will supply you with money to be transmitted by her, as if it were the produce of the sale."

"To spare her feelings, eh? Ay, thus we go on, Nannie, ministering to the pride of others, and to our own, from year to year—

from life's end to life's end,—creating fair surfaces, under which we deceive ourselves into the belief that vessels of clay are vessels of gold and silver. Why should that indigent woman disdain the charity of her neighbours? Why should we administer to her false pride?”

“We are not fair judges, dear Parson Hurdiss,” rejoined Nannie. “*We* have not been pampered into pride. *We* were not born in the Purple Chamber!”

“And how know you, lass, that it was otherwise with this poor recluse?”

“What *she* has never asserted, I have no right to proclaim.”

“You were told so, probably, by that self-seeking son of hers, who, had he done his duty by her, would have abided at Middledale to close her eyes, instead of bewildering her brain and his own by chimerical schemes of shaking the pagoda-tree for golden fruit which it has long ceased to yield,” exclaimed the

Pairson.—“Had he really loved the mother who so adores him, Nannie, he would have stayed and worked for her; ay, even as a quarryman, or hind, rather than leave her to the charity of strangers.”

His companion listened in indignant silence.—It was not for *her* to become the advocate of Maurice.

“But so it is ever with these Catholics!” pursued the prejudiced Pairson.—“The mother that bore them, the child of their loins, is less to them than their church or their priest. If that young Jesuit were to achieve the fortune he pretends to, he would be making ostentatious endowments to St. Gideon’s College, long ere he remembered the poor cottage at Middledale.”

“I will not plead his cause,” said Nannie, mildly, “because I know that my dear old friend has prejudged it.—But let me instance to you, by another example, that towards the Catholics you are grievously unjust.—You

have heard, I know, under what circumstances Lord Mardyke acquired the domain of Hawks-hill ; that, having won more money at Doncaster of the younger Van der Helde than he was able to pay, the elder one made a sacrifice of the property to liquidate the debt."

"But the Van der Heldes are Calvinists, Nannie. — How do *they* afford a case in point?"

"The Lanvilles are rigid Catholics ; and Count Léonce, as deeply implicated as his brother-in-law in that miserable affair, would have been ruined, but that his sister generously made over to him the whole of her fortune, leaving herself only a sufficient dowry to become a professed nun."

"That fine young girl, whom I saw riding so merrily about the country scarce two years ago, a professed nun?" exclaimed the Pastor.

"In order to redeem the family honour, and re-establish her imprudent brother."—

"Iniquitous — scandalous — blasphemous !"

exclaimed David Hurdis, stopping short, and striking his stout walking-stick into the turf. —“Do these people consider themselves entitled to traffic and chaffer with their Maker? —to assume His livery, as the only badge of poverty that does not degrade them from their order?—If this girl—I mean this noble young lady—was desirous of surrendering her fortune for the benefit of her only brother, why not devote herself to a simple mode of life, and humbly dedicate her days to good works, (as many of our Protestant ladies have done,) without shutting herself up in a convent, merely that eyes profane might not pry into her ceremonious devotions, or espy her garments of serge?”

“To every country — every creed — be its habits and institutions,” replied Nannie. “My friend, Eugénie, is happy in the belief of her duty fulfilled, and her salvation accomplished. And surely, if self-abnegation—”

“Nannie, my dear child,” interrupted the

venerable Pastor, taking her hands firmly between his own,—“deceive not yourself by dictionary words.—My poor daughter, slaving for her husband and ten children in Ilsin'ton Market-place, is far more self-denying than your lazy nun, mechanically rehearsing her canticles, and beating her breast, with cries of ‘*mea culpa.*’”

Nannie would not join in a contest of opinion with one whose grey hairs and pastoral authority over her, entitled him to her utmost deference. But it did not alienate her a jot the more from Maurice Varnham, or diminish her affectionate admiration of the sacrifice of Eugénie de Lanville, that they worshipped God before another altar than her own.

All that he had asserted, however, and all that she soon afterwards learned from Dr. Moss concerning the condition of Mrs. Varnham, saddened her with the certainty that her long-suffering friend was going hence to be no more seen.

Her own observations fully confirmed the decree. There was a yearning glance in the eyes of the cripple, when she had her good-bye, every night, which only too plainly indicated how she longed to retain her by her side. But Nannie dared not propose to stay. Her father, with the fretfulness of increasing years, had more than once taxed her with considering Hawyer's Cottage far more her home than Gridlands.

Still, though their hearts were so close together, there was an unrecognised gulf between them. As little as ever did neighbour Varnham recur to the past; as little as ever confide to her young consolatress the exact appointment occupied by her son—his future prospects—his present abode.—Gladly, setting all personal feelings apart, would Nannie have addressed to him tidings of his mother's precarious condition, which Mrs. Varnham's apprehension of giving him pain probably induced her to withhold. But Nannie knew not where

to address him.—“India” is a wide word.—She was even uncertain in which of the Presidencies his destinies were appointed.

Nannie at length resolved to take courage, and inquire definitely of the sick woman all that it so much imported her to know ; when, lo ! one night, a bitter night in January, when the beck was congealed in its bed, and the sleet rattled like a shower of arrows against the shutters of Gridlands, while the wind howled in the wide chimney as though an enemy were at hand, Nannie was summoned by a lad dispatched to her by David Hurdis, to the bedside of the dying woman.

Though her very breathing, as she met the external air, was almost suspended by the intense cold, she instantly hurried back with him to Hawyer's Cottage ; and the anxious and dilated eyes of the cripple, and the glazed look of her cheeks and brow, convinced poor Nannie at once that her last moments were at hand.

A powerful vapour of ether pervaded the room ; and by her bedside sat the grey-haired pastor, unable to restrain his tears ; yet so venerable in his simplicity of Christian commiseration, that the most gorgeous robes of the Catholic church could not have added a particle to his dignity. "Thy sins be forgiven thee !" conveyed, from *his* simple lips, an almost apostolic benediction.

Aware that between Nannie and his penitent there existed a heart in heart confidence, as between mother and daughter, he rose to depart when Miss Balfour placed herself on her knees beside the couch of the sufferer.

"Till to-morrow !" said he, wringing the slender fingers of Mrs. Varnham, already moist with the dews of death. But he knew that the only morrow likely to dawn for her, was the great day of eternity.

"My child, my Nannie," faltered the sick woman, collecting all her strength to fold her within her feeble arms, the moment David

Hurdis, having enveloped himself in his rough cloak, slowly quitted the room. "I should have spoken to you before,—I should have told you long ago, that we were about to part. But you have undergone so many cares! I did not wish to see your young face again darkened by a cloud!"

The only solicitude of Miss Balfour, at that moment, was how best to assuage the throes convulsing the infirm frame of her friend. Drops of anguish falling from the brow of the dying woman, attested the torture which her fortitude would fain have concealed.

"I have scarcely strength to thank you—scarcely breath to talk to you. But I must no longer delay," she faltered. "My moments are numbered, Nannie,—my child, my darling—and it is to you I must confide my last instructions to my son. Some time since, I wrote to recal him to England; because, when I am gone, there will be no further obstacle to his sojourn in the land of his

fathers. But when he comes back, those by whom his destiny is controlled, will never deal candidly with him. It is not in their nature,—it is not in their faith. You, Nannie, whom he loves like his own soul, must be my messenger to Maurice.”

“I will conscientiously discharge any duty with which you may entrust me,” said the sobbing girl. “But remember that we are no longer together as we have been. My word may not suffice to Maurice. Let me bring you a pencil and paper. Write what you would say.”

“That has been already provided for,” murmured the sufferer. “Take away with you to-night, Nannie, yonder casket, of which the key lies on my pillow; the second time, dear child, that I have confided it to your hand. It contains a letter—a letter of explanation—addressed to my son, in intervals of distracting sorrow, distracting pain. Give it into no other hand than his. Maurice must


read it in your presence. Till he has thoroughly perused it, Nannie, if you love me, pledge not yourself to become his wife !”

“ He will never ask me,” murmured Miss Balfour. “ He told me when we last parted, that—”

“ Mere ravings of a lover’s fretful jealousy ! He loves you better than his life. His first movement on landing in England, will be to hasten to your feet. Let his next be to peruse the dying wishes of his unhappy mother.”

They were interrupted by Dinah, with a restorative only too much needed by her patient. But the power of swallowing was gone. The power of articulation scarcely remained.

“ Farewell, my daughter,” were the last intelligible words uttered by the cripple. “ Farewell ! Grieve not for the death of one whose life has been one of bitterness and sorrow. Oh ! that in a world whose best solace is the interchange of human affection, we should deal so hardly by each other—so hardly—so——”



The sobs of those who watched by her bedside were anxiously suspended, in order that not one whisper of that expiring voice should be lost.

“Make him happy!” was all that Nannie could distinctly hear, as she bent over Mrs. Varnham’s wasted form. “When we meet again, Nannie, I shall demand at your hands an account of the well-doing of my son!”—

CHAPTER III.

FIVE days afterwards, the snow lay deep on a new-made grave in Middledale church-yard. Small matter of interest was it to the drudges of the hard-working hamlet, whether the poor cripple were lying on her couch in Hawyer's Cottage, or in her bed of clay. The utmost notice taken of her departure was by a remark that her death would be a great riddance for the Balfours; that the poor, useless, lame woman must have hung tedious heavy on their hands; and that Dinah Slade would now be wanting a service.

But to Nannie, what a loss! Everybody—everything—seemed to be deserting her.

To the death of her kind mother, had succeeded the gain and loss of those new friends, whose brief sojourn in England had cost them so dear. Maurice had thrown her off;—cousin Ely, her playmate,—her other self,—was thoroughly estranged. And now, the gentle spirit which had so incorporated itself with her daily life, and been to her as a guardian angel, was gone to its rest!

How chilling was the thought, amid that dreary winter weather! The north wind wailing through the leafless lime branches, seemed like the requiem of the dead. Nannie had been too much shaken by that deathbed parting, to be aware of what had immediately ensued. But by degrees, she learned that David Hurdis, at his last interview with the deceased, had received instructions to apprise the Liverpool attorneys of her decease, who would provide for her interment.


And provide they did. The partner who had spoken so harshly of her to the Rawsons,

made his appearance, to see that she was buried in the cheapest and humblest manner. On his first arrival, he had signified his intention that, in her son's absence from England, Mrs. Varnham's effects should be sold. But when his attention was called to the worthlessness of the few poor articles of furniture belonging to her,—to the meanness of her threadbare apparel,—to the all but destitution in which her latter days had worn away,—even *he* appeared shocked and distressed.

“But was this all? Had she no valuables—no hoarded trinkets?”

“Nothing! Not a lock and key in the cottage. She had subsisted chiefly on the labour of her hands, partly on charity.”

“Then he will be appeased!” burst involuntarily from the lips of the man of the law. And the faithful attendant of the dead was empowered to take possession of her pauper-like inheritance. David had truly said that there was not sufficient to repay the sale.



At his daughter's request, Michael Balfour readily consented that Dinah should, for the present, retain possession of Hawyer's Cottage.

If, as she informed him, Maurice was about to return, the poor lad would be glad to find wherewithal to lay his head. It would be a comfort in his trouble, to find that nothing was altered in his old home.

It was not often, now, that the old farmer spoke so much to the purpose. It counted among the many distresses of Nannie, that her father's faculties were manifestly failing. —It was not to be wondered at.—Michael had far exceeded the allotted years of man, as was more than once observed to his daughter by old Martha, in confiding to her that the hinds had a hard matter to follow the contradictory orders of their old master, and that it behoved her to take upon herself the management of the farm.

But for worlds would not Nannie have issued or controverted a single order, so as to

excite his suspicions of his own infirmity. They were above the world. What mattered the gain or loss of a few pounds, so that the old man retained his sense of authority, and sat in his arm-chair by the fireside, unconscious that the things of this world were crumbling from his hold?

The point that chiefly grieved her in his growing weakness, was his jealousy of the hours she still unwittingly devoted to Hawyer's Cottage. He could not bear her to be out of his sight. The nipping weather confined him to the fireside. Yet he often missed her when he wanted John Rawson's weekly newspaper read to him for the second or third time, or his pipe replenished, or to be told, over and over again, what dinner was preparing for him.

At such moments, Nannie was often seated in the old arm-chair at Hawyer's, wrapped in her cloak, and gazing vacantly upon the cheerless hearth, where she would never con-

sent to Dinah's lighting a fire for her use ; —dreaming of the past, dreaming of the future,—counting, by those strange computations suggested by the heart rather than the head, how many months, how many weeks, how many days, must elapse, ere Maurice received the summons of his mother, and returned to his deserted home.

And how often were those calculations discredited ! How often did a messenger arrive from Gridlands, apprising Miss Balfour that her father wanted her, that all was going wrong at home : yet no news of Maurice ! Not a line addressed to his mother ; and no intimation that he was aware of his bereavement.

That letter—packet, rather than letter—bequeathed to her by the dead, had been again and again examined by the poor girl, on whose heart and conscience the deposit lay heavy as lead. When the first breath of spring brought forth the tender, shell-like leaflets of the old

lime-trees, she began to ask herself whether, if Maurice rejected his mother's appeal, and adhered to his new career, it was not her duty to remit to him at once Mrs. Varnham's last wishes. But again, how was this to be done? She had no clue to his address; and it would be sacrilege to entrust so sacred a deposit to any but the surest method of communication. Besides, his mother had expressly conditioned that *she* was to be present when he opened the packet.

She armed her courage, therefore, to wait : —to *wait* !—one of the most trying ordeals of human philosophy.—Alas ! how many precious years of our life are squandered in waiting ; waiting for those who come not,—waiting for letters,—waiting for the fulfilment of engagements,—waiting for the restoration of health,—waiting for the fruition of hopes, for the maturity of our children, the reconciliation of estranged friends, the reforms of public life, the alliances of private !—Regardless of the

sunshine of Heaven, the breath of May, the rainbow in the sky, waiting, still *waiting*; waiting, while the wood is seasoning for our coffin, and the woollen weaving for our shroud!—

Summer came and waned. Buds formed themselves amid the foliage of the rose-trees of Gridlands,—expanded, blossomed, shed their leaves :—but no Maurice. No letters arrived. He had, perhaps, received information from Messrs. Macglashan and Thorpe of the death of his mother.

Overland mails had not at that epoch overmastered all obstacles of time or space : one of those precious boons which the world has accepted with its usual grudging ingratitude. The communication between England and India was still an affair of months, instead of weeks ; and all she could do was to meet with patience the fretful questions of the old farmer, whose lack-lustre eye and incessant prattle afforded sad companionship for her anxieties.

“These trials will be accounted unto thee, my poor child,” whispered David Hurdie, when, one day, just as she had espied the first autumnal tint on the old lime-trees and the first brown shrivelled leaf lying at her feet—he found her in tears. — “Be not dismayed, Nannie. Days of duty, child, have a sunshine of their own. No created mortal can foresee or frame his destinies. *My* crust has been often hard, my draught scanty; and I have been tempted to rebel against the Giver. But now that my life is at its close, I recognise only the mercies dispensed to me. On retrospection, I would not exchange this rough frock for cope or stole. So few have been my temptations to evil, so close my fellowship with my brethren, that God and my neighbour have been anigh me, and easy to serve. Nannie, lass—cheer up!—Many a great lady out yon, in what is called the world, would be content to change her lot with one so calm and innocent as thine.”

Between the philosophy of eighty and eighteen, there is a chasm not easy to bridge over; but the lessons of her homely teacher served at least to stimulate the courage of the desponding girl. She strove to exert herself. She endeavoured to make her doting father's comfort the sole object of her life, and to find worthy objects in the village to share the time and charity so long devoted to Hawyer's Cottage. She even attempted to resume the studies of her interrupted education. But *that* was beyond her power. Impossible to pin down her attention to grammars and lexicons, with such urgent reminiscences, such earnest hopes, still stirring in her soul.

Twice, since the departure of her foreign friends from Hawkshill, had letters reached her from Clémence.—The first announced the birth of a son, who seemed to have at once possessed himself of her whole affections; for she spoke of her sister's taking the veil as a “judicious family arrangement,” not as the

event which deprived her for ever of the beloved companion of her childhood. The second, at the close of Eugénie's novitiate, stated that the happy results of that event were now perfected, by the marriage of their dear Léonce with the wealthy and beautiful daughter of the Prince de Courtrai; nor could even the simple-hearted Nannie help surmising that the triumphant tone in which this lofty alliance was narrated, purported to rebuke the *petite paysanne's* presumption in declining the hand of one whose knightly ancestor was the companion-in-arms, at Acre, of Richard Cœur de Lion.

With Eugénie herself, all hope of intercourse was at an end. Eugénie was, in truth, Eugénie no longer; and Sœur Véronique of the Sacré Cœur, must not endanger her soul's salvation by correspondence with a heretic.

The lot of that young and happy being whom chance had brought into such familiar

intercourse with her thoughts and feelings, thus prematurely cut off from the joys of life, was far more appalling to Nannie than that of the gentle friend over whose head the grass and daisies were growing.

She had often heard Maurice enlarge with enthusiasm upon the peace of a conventual life. Sœur Véronique herself, before her vocation was forced upon her, had described the solitary cells and quiet corridors, of Jette, as far more congenial to her taste than the brilliant *salons* of the Hotel de Lanville, or the tumultuous gaieties of the court. But the heart of the young girl, accustomed only to the spectacle of domestic love that sweetens the hardest fare and brightens the humblest cottage, spoke a very different language. There is, moreover, in English nature an intuitive aspiration after freedom, to which the very word *clôture* is abhorrent. The "grate" presented to the imagination of the *petite paysanne* the horrors of a prison. And over

these things she pondered and pondered, till the exercise of her reflective powers almost supplied the place of experience in enlarging and fortifying her mind.

In all that remained wanting to her of knowledge of the world, what a gain to the recluse ! Why prematurely acquire that fatal insight into social abuses which deprives the present of its charm, and overclouds the future ? What would it have availed to Nannie Balfour of Gridlands, to know that the Age she lived in, if schooled out of the arrogant pomp of Dives, exhibited only the fictitious prosperity of Lazarus, having his sores concealed under a specious mantle ; that, if less brutal than our forefathers, it is because the cunning of civilisation has enabled us to varnish over our evil propensities ; that those who confide in the surface of things, entrust their safety, like the Neapolitans, to a crust of ashes under which the glowing lava is still waiting to engulf them.

Better that she should still watch on, waiting the return of him she was never to see again ; wiping the tears of dotage from the eyes of her father ; or even puzzling over the bewilderment of German declinations. Farsighted philosophy, by straining the optic nerve, destroys our just appreciation of the objects nearest to us ;—the ripple on the adjacent brook—the pencilling of the wild-flower at our feet.—

Meanwhile, time glided past, silent and unobserved, like the flowing of a stream. An unincidental life is proverbially the speediest in its lapse ; and a long voyage, so tedious in apprehension, is looked back upon as a day. “To rock the cradle of declining age” is an occupation as productive of calm to the active agent, as to the slumberer ; and though two whole years elapsed after the death of Mrs. Varnham, before her aged benefactor of Gridlands was laid beside her in the Middledale grave yard, it seemed to Nannie, in the re-

trospect, as though the one had scarcely survived the other.

Of Elisha, for the last twelve months, she had heard less and less. At intervals, formal letters, but oftener large packets of books, reached her from her cousin; books selected no longer by the lover, but by the preceptor. Fiction had given way to fact; poetry to histories, memoirs, travels. Now that his health was established, his mind seemed to have attained a more vigorous texture.

When summoned by Nannie to Gridlands, to assist in laying his uncle's head in the grave, he declined the journey. But it was on a plea which she was obliged to recognise as valid. His mother's life hung upon a thread. He did not dare to leave her.

Another friend, to whom she had written to solicit the same mark of respect, had been forced to excuse himself on grounds of a similar nature. Jakes Zelters was now a fixture in his arm-chair, at Stockwell. But,

conscious that his presence was due to the representative of old Madam Verhout and her highly-esteemed bailiff, he dispatched in his place the son who also represented him in his compting-house in the Barbican. But, alas ! the Dutch delegate made his appearance at Gridlands, on the day of the funeral, armed with a desk full of parchments, leases, and account-books, twice the size of his carpet bag ; the very aspect of which might have affected the most iron-headed conveyancer going with a fit of the megrims, and was far from calculated to raise the depressed spirits of Miss Balfour.

As Wilhem Zelters (who wrote himself junior, though on the verge of fifty) was a sober, solémn widower, keenly alive to the value of the securities under his charge, it is possible that Nannie's forethoughted old guardian may not have been wholly disinterested in his choice of a representative. But if so, he reckoned without his hostess ; nor, when the

new man of business discovered her appalling ignorance of business, insensibility to her interests, and prodigality to the point of refusing to let the message of Gridlands, from which she already announced her intention of absenting herself till the attainment of her majority, would he have accepted for wife a woman, however opulent, so manifestly unworthy the Dutch blood stagnating in her veins.

In so decided a favourite of fortune as Nannie Balfour, covetousness, however, would have been a crime. While so many of her fellow-creatures were struggling for the necessities of life, some toiling by the sweat of their brows, some, of their brains, Providence was heaping up ingots around her. Those who preceded her, appeared to have lived and laboured, only that their self-sacrificing frugality might provide her with luxuries. At the death of Michael Balfour, it appeared that his savings invested in the Ilslington Bank, amounted to a larger sum than Zelters and

Son already held in trust for his daughter. The *petite paysanne* was in actual possession of twelve hundred a year !

But that Middledale had become too narrow a sphere for her aspirations, was by no means the result of this discovery. Had she been to work for her bread, Nannie would still have expatriated herself. Not because she had heard the simple Dalesfolk scouted by Maurice as miserable boors ; not because from Eugénie and Clémence she had obtained an insight into the refinements of civilised life ; but because *there* she had both suffered and inflicted pain ; because *there* she had alienated from herself her childhood's gentle friend ; because *there* she had been rejected by Maurice ; because *there*, for two long years, she had watched and wept for his return.

Still, though resolved upon departure, when the time arrived for bidding adieu to the old homestead with its lime-trees, the spreading moors with their gorgeous purple carpeting

the green hill-sides where her flocks were quietly cropping their meagre pasture,—above all, that sacred grave-yard, whose very silence spoke audibly to her heart,—she felt that she was severing herself from the better part of her existence. Applying to herself the words of Tasso's hermit to Erminia,

D'ogni oltraggio e scorno
La mia famiglia e la mia greggia illese,
Sempre qui fur, nè strepito di Marte
Ancor turbò questa remota parte,

she seemed to foresee that in the wide world of the continent to which she was hastening, many outrages, many scorns might await her.

Previous to quitting England, she was to spend a month with the Zelters family, that she might judge for herself of the elderly duenna whom, at her desire, they had provided for their ward ; and in the interim, she resolved on making a strenuous effort to obtain some insight into the destinies

of Maurice. If evil had betided him, better to know the worst. If good, and he wilfully abstained from communication with Middledale, it seemed her duty to apprise him of his mother's bequest.

But to her application to Messrs. Macglashan and Thorp, the coldest possible reply was accorded.—“It was not the wish of the young gentleman's surviving relatives,” they wrote, “that he should maintain any further communication with the friends of the unfortunate woman who had been so providentially removed.”

Nannie's first impulse was to write a second time, and inform these churlish people that she had a sacred duty to perform, by delivering to Maurice Varnham a death-bed bequest from his mother. Second thoughts reminded her that they would probably attribute *real* value to the contents of the packet, and demand its cession. Better, therefore, to wait,

and, if possible, obtain intelligence from other quarters. Rather anything than prove faithless to the trust she had so solemnly undertaken.


CHAPTER IV.

So unfamiliar was the farmer's daughter with the luxuries and refinements of life, that she may be forgiven for passively assenting to old Jakes Zelters's daily vaunt, that Greenhill Lodge, his Stockwell villa, was a paradise on earth. He had endeavoured to make it so, after the Batavian fashion, by costly floriculture. It was the old man's only pleasure, only prodigality ; and Nannie, introduced for the first time to stove-plants and exotics, felt as if a page of choice poetry lay developed before her.

She could scarcely understand how the nature of Wilhem Zelters remained so dull and dry, with such exquisite flowers diffusing their

fragrance through the conservatory opening into the drawing-room of Greenhill Lodge. The priggish head-gardener, whose pride it was to carry away golden medals at every flower-show in the suburbs, could not repress a supercilious smile at her enthusiasm. The fuchsias which her inexperience selected as the most beautiful, had, he said, "been three years out, and were not worth speaking of."

The deep mourning worn for her father prevented, of course, anything like festivity in the house; or Nannie's first introduction to London society might have afforded her singular impressions. But two of her guardian's married daughters were invited to stay with him during her visit; the elder of whom, Cordelia, married to a rich banker, was a soft-looking, soft-minded, unmeaning dame, all simper and good will towards any one even remotely connected with the rich Van der Heldes of the Hague; the other, Mrs. Brent, a clever, handsome, eccentric woman, uncon-



scious or indifferent that she differed in any respect from other people. Her husband was a K.C. of the highest eminence; too much occupied with his business to take much heed of her oddities or the censures to which they exposed herself and him.

For, in those days, eccentricity amounted to an all but statutable offence. It was the last year of the reign of the last George; that crowned fribble, who, had he been born two centuries before, a Stuart instead of a Guelph, would have united the despotism of our first Charles with the licentiousness of the second.

Tyrannic in trifles, he had pummiced down the surface of his court to such polished brilliancy, that the slightest divergence from conventional rule became a deformity. A man who dressed or spoke, or even looked, otherwise than in accordance with the rubric as by Pavilion established, was a condemned heretic. "Such men were dangerous!"—Such men must not pretend to rise in church or state.

There was a "king's pattern" for bishops, as well as for tea-spoons.

It is a vulgar error to fancy that the influence of the court reaches no further than the yeomen of the guard at the palace gate. As a pebble thrown into a mill-pond ruffles in concentric circles the full expanse, even such obscure spots as a villa at Stockwell exhibit a weakened reflection of the follies paramount in the high places of the land. Mont Blanc is visible at sixty miles' distance; and the meretricious displays of Carlton House were emulated to the uttermost limits of our lord-loving island. Let us, however, keep the secrets from our grandchildren; for the inventions of that tasteless time have happily left no permanent trace. The rubbish has been shot, and built over. Like other stage decorations, the royal Carlton and royal Cottage have disappeared; and

Dome-capt towers and stucco palaces,
Left not a wreck behind!

Popular adulation, however, though general, is not universal. There is negative as well as positive attraction; and for every hundred courtiers, there will always be a *frondeur* or two, whose turbulence is not to be silenced. By degrees, the deaf begin to hear, the blind to see. The word "Reform" was already shaped by the lips of millions of murmurers.

Mrs. Brent, the daughter of Mr. Zelters, deputed to do the honours of Greenhill to Miss Balfour, was, in her degree, a thoroughly independent member of society; and as she said everything that came into her head, and wore whatever came to hand, it was fortunate that considerable beauty of person, and powers of mind, covered a multitude of sins of taste. Her young guest, indeed, unversed in the etiquettes of society, was less startled than people of the world were apt to be, at her unvarnished assertions and daring costumes. But even Nannie could not help feeling that, if such were the tone and fashions of London

ladies, Clémence and poor Eugénie de Lanville were far pleasanter specimens of her sex.

After a day or two, however, she grew to like her, as people acquire a taste for olives or caviare. Her outspoken truths were more palatable, in the long run, than the smiling platitudes of Cordelia Whittingham; who, having obtained some knowledge of West-End fripperies from a ladyship who had condescended to marry a junior partner in the Lombard Street firm of which her husband was the head, was a little too apt to prattle about Shakspeare and the musical glasses.

“Why are you going abroad, little girl?” inquired Mrs. Brent, abruptly, of Nannie, one evening, as they were standing together in the conservatory, watching the opening of a night-flowering Cereus. “Better remain in England, marry, and live (as people do in story-books) very happy ever after. — Not my brother Wilhem—as my father, I suspect, would have

you. But a man of sense and spirit, with strength of lungs to resist our national atmosphere, and strength of mind to overcome our national creepmouseishness."

"There may come a time for that hereafter," replied the "little girl," thus unceremoniously addressed,—rejoiced that there was no auditor of this strange attack.

"Never!" cried Mrs. Brent, with an emphatic shake of the head. "You are young and rich. Once experience the freedom of single blessedness under such advantages, and you will be in no hurry to place your neck in any man's collar, or your purse in any man's pocket. To obey bit and bridle, a mare should be broke in her foalhood."

"I am in no haste to resign the enjoyment of a will of my own," persisted Nannie, a little abashed.

"Well, don't try the system too long. You'll find wilfulness as hard to leave off as opium-eating or betel-chewing. And how are

you ever to acclimatise yourself in chilly England—above all, in smoky London—after sunning yourself for years in the sweet South?”

“A winter in Italy can surely do me no great harm? Two years hence, I am to return to England. Mr. Zelters wishes me to be on the spot, to wind up his guardianship account.”

“Two years!” exclaimed Mrs. Brent, taking her abruptly by the arm. “Sojourn only six months, my dear child, in any foreign country, and you will never again find courage for the high-pressure formality of Great British society; where a man may not uplift his eyebrow, or a woman her little finger, except in conformity with what is called public opinion. Don’t risk it, little girl! If you are ever to become a homely English matron, carve your own mutton, pay your own weekly bills, and catechize your own Sunday-school; don’t wander out of the pale of roast-beef,

plum-pudding, Watts's hymns, and God save the King. I, who know that, betide what may, my household gods must still be set up in Russell Square and my boys educated at Rugby, dare not allow myself so much as the luxury of opening a French book, or skimming the *Débats*. I have even interdicted Juliennes and soufflés in my bills of fare, as generative of unbecoming levity ; and diet myself on sea-biscuits, brown stout, and Political Economy, in order to be a suitable wife to my excellent but matter-of-fact husband, and a fit companion for his associates."

Nannie, though somewhat mystified by the irony of her new acquaintance, could not refrain from a smile. But Mrs. Brent looked so superlatively handsome, as she said all this, with her dark braids, and Grecian features lighted up by whimsicality, that she was not inclined to analyse too curiously the meaning of her paradoxes.

"However," resumed the strong-minded

woman, perceiving that Miss Balfour was indisposed to reply, "we are all taxed according to our means, except by the king's exchequer. The life I lead is suited to my nature. My sister Cordelia and her banker-husband live among fine folks in May Fair, aping the great world at third-hand, and not daring to be either merry or wise, because fun and wisdom are out of fashion ; and not a word is uttered in their gaudy drawing-room which is worth hearing or remembering. If one of the Whittingham visitors found himself on the verge of a clever remark, he would desist from the rash act, lest he should pass for bookish and pedantic. In Cordelia's set, your thoughts and gowns must be of the most flimsy materials, lest you should be suspected of vulgar economy, and wanting to turn them to account.

"Mrs. Whittingham appears to be very happy," pleaded Nannie, who had been wistfully watching the full-blown Cordelia's incessant smiles.

"She *is* very happy. My sister possesses a sweet temper, a good digestion, easy circumstances, and a total want of sensibility,—sterling elements of human happiness. *I* am *not* good-tempered. But that I am fortunately yoked with a man my superior in intellect by a hundred thousand cubits, I should have turned out a Xantippe. Had my husband resembled Cordelia's chuckle-headed, tuft-hunting, worse half, for instance, I won't answer for the consequences.—Arsenic is cheap, and he would scarcely have lived his natural life out—"

"I would not hear your enemy say so," rejoined Nannie, amazed at her recklessness of speech.

"Luckily, I am surrounded by congenial spirits. No washed-out mincing ladyships, no used-up swindling lords; but plain-spoken, clear-minded, men and women. The eagle must be fed on raw meat, Nannie, as the parrot with almonds. Robert Brent, on his

return home for relaxation after his day's business, would not stand the importunate frivolity of fops and fools ; or of silly women, flitting like moths into his face."

"I should have thought that, to unbend his mind after his fatigues, would be a relief."

"Nonsense, little girl!—To unbend, implies artificial tension. — A strong mind cannot unbend. It is like a granite wall ; against which, whether you discharge a shuttlecock or a bullet, it still remains a granite wall. Robert Brent is a cheerful man ; but he likes rational conversation — vigorous argument. He is not to be badgered out of *his* opinions by club personalities, or trifled out of them by the last bon mot."

"You almost inspire me with awe of Mr. Brent," said Nannie. "Yet he seems so mild and indulgent!"

"The most genuinely excellent of human beings," was the proud rejoinder.—"A man

who lives only to confer happiness on all belonging to him."

She was leaning, as she uttered these words, against one of the columns of the conservatory, with her hands crossed behind her, and her head thrown back, in a somewhat masculine attitude. But the spirit that flashed from her fine eyes, as she pronounced this honest panegyric on her mate, redeemed the fault.

"I am getting very prosy," said she, conscious, perhaps, of the effect she was producing; "but when I catch the eye of the speaker, I am apt to lay down the law. Observe, by the way, how English people, individually and collectively, exude at every pore the influence of our vaunted constitution! Our institutions are sure to exhibit a parliamentary form; our opinions to manifest themselves by ballot.—We have associations, public meetings, and speechifications, for everything and nothing; Abolition of this and Promotion of t'other;—to prevent coster-mongers from

drubbing their donkeys, or human brutes their wives; or to send missionaries, to be eaten alive, in the interior of Africa, by pismires or cannibals; or establish polyglot institutions for the confusion of tongues. All these minor parliaments, doubtless, effect *some* good.—If nothing else, they help to polish up, by practice, the periods of tyros; and persuade the manufacturing towns, through newspaper reports, that other places of public amusement are open in London, besides the House of Commons and Exeter Hall.”

“Can you inform me,” said Nannie, who, during this long and rambling harangue, had been studying within herself in what manner to introduce into the conversation the subject nearest her heart, yet managed to put the question at last in the *non sequitur* style peculiar to young ladies in love;—“can you happen to inform me what is the best mode of obtaining intelligence of a friend in India?”

“In the Company’s service?—Civil or mi-

litary ?—In what Presidency ?”—inquired the strong-minded woman, coming instantly to the point.

With a deep blush, Nannie avowed her ignorance of all these particulars. It was to ascertain them, in fact, that she required assistance.

“Come with me into my father’s library, then,” said Mrs. Brent, leading her rapidly through the drawing-room, where the rest of the party were absorbed in the taciturn mysteries of whist. “My father has all sorts of East India Directories, Registers, Reports, and Almanacks. Such is *his* notion of useful knowledge ; such the literature he delights in. Like Plato, he has banished poets from his Republic, the better to insure his trust in Cocker’s Arithmetic and Blue Books.”

Red books, meanwhile, without end, were taken down and placed before Nannie, “published by authority of the H. E. I. C.”—But she turned over the pages hopelessly, as we

do those of the dictionary of some unknown tongue.


"What is the name you wish to find?" enquired Mrs. Brent, desirous to assist her. "Probably a Balfour,—and you have long passed the B.s!—But you have got to the very end of the volume; and none but my outlandish family are classed under Z.—Ah! the Vs!" she chattered on. "But I fear you will not find a single Verhout."

Mrs. Brent seemed resolved that the "little girl" should interest herself only in her kith and kin.

But, alas! the name of Varnham was as completely absent from the page as that of Verhout.

"Here is another Register," said Mrs. Brent, perceiving by Miss Balfour's wistful air that she had not obtained the desired information. Again, however, the search was fruitless.

"You must apply to my brother, Wilhem,



for assistance," observed Mrs. Brent. "Wilhem is an incomparable truffle dog. Nothing like him for hunting out a name or a fact. Give him, in writing, the indispensable data, and he will be in Leadenhall Street to-morrow ; breaking clerks upon the wheel, and putting directors to torture, till he has obtained the fullest particulars."

Nannie, however, demurred. She was unwilling to afford to the Zelters family any clue to the enthralling influence under which she laboured. It was clear,—as clear as print and paper could make it,—that, in the current year, no individual of the name of Varnham was engaged in either the civil or military service of the Honourable East India Company !

The following evening, Mr. Brent, apprised by his wife of Nannie's solicitude, good-naturedly volunteered his services. But his lawyer-like precision was somewhat baffled by the incoherency of her reply. It was only by dexterous cross-examination he managed to

extort from her that the young man she desired to trace was named Varnham, the son of a deceased Lancashire neighbour, to whom she was desirous of dispatching a packet entrusted to her charge.

In the course of a few days, he was able to assure her, on the highest authority, that no individual of that name had passed through the preliminary examination essential to an Indian appointment.

While still confused by this perplexing intelligence, she had to reply to further questions on the part of the shrewd lawyer, by whom she was seated at dinner, and for whom her artlessness possessed all the charm of novelty. He had never before seen so much *naïveté* combined with such perfect intelligence.

“And what are you going to do in foreign parts?” he persisted. “Why in such a hurry to desert your country and friends?”

“I have no tie to England.—I am nearly alone in the world,” she replied. “My edu-

cation has been neglected ; and it is pleasanter to a grown-up child to acquire knowledge by seeing and hearing, than by hard reading ; by hand-books rather than horn-books."

" Well answered ! But you may learn more than is good for you. You may be taught more than is even pleasant. Bad accounts reach us just now, Miss Balfour, from the continent. Revolutionary movements are fermenting in all directions ; and wars and rumours of wars are harsh hearing for a young lady."

" In case of any popular disturbance, I should take shelter in a convent," replied Nannie. " I have a friend,—I might almost say an only friend—a professed nun in the Sacré Cœur."

" A *nun* your bosom friend ?" exclaimed Robert Brent, who regarded nuns and monks as about the most useless human lumber encumbering the earth. " I'm sincerely sorry to hear it. — First, you abandon your native country ; next, you will, perhaps, abandon its

Established Church. And yet you look too sensible and temperate for foolish vacillations. I scarcely ever knew a person change his religion, who was not previously ill at ease in his conscience. An innocent mind is seldom restless. People conscious of frailty betake themselves to the indulgences of the Catholic church, as a sick person has recourse to the nostrums of a quack."

Nannie was silent. She was, perhaps, secretly connecting the change of faith of poor Mrs. Varnham, with the dark hints thrown out by the Liverpool attorney.

"Your nun of the Sacré Cœur has put me more out of conceit than ever with your projected journey," resumed Mr. Brent. "If you have, as you assert, no ties to England, it is time you made some. Come and stay with my wife in Russell Square. She will make you happy. Her bark is worse than her bite; and she only barks at vagrants. Or go and visit Cordelia Whittingham, in May

Fair. Between both, we will show you something of society, and administer a few of its pleasures. We can't afford to lose you, Miss Balfour; and trust me, you will learn more by association with cultivated men and women, than by staring at Swiss mountains, or wandering through all the picture galleries of Rome."

Nannie Balfour made no reply. Touched by his almost fatherly remonstrances, tears stood in her eyes. Perhaps the disappointment of her sanguine hope that in London she should obtain authentic intelligence of Maurice, was not without its share in her emotion.

Nothing that he had said, however,—no argument that reached her ears under the roof of Greenhill Lodge,—availed to alter her determination. She was in haste to depart. The fear of being summoned to attend the last moments of aunt Dorthy, and exposed to reproaches concerning her estrangement from

her cousin, nay, perhaps, further solicitations on his own part, made her in haste to be gone.

Escorted, therefore, by a courier many years confidentially employed by Zelters and Son, and a companion, highly recommended by them, whose very face was capable of putting to flight a brigade of dragoons, early in the autumn, Miss Balfour took her departure from England.

The world was all before her, where to choose
Her place of rest, and Providence her guide.

But Providence, in its wisdom, does not always select the smoothest path for those whom it desires to instruct in the Lessons of Life.

CHAPTER V.

THE lady engaged by Zelters and Son as duenna to their ward, had been selected for the office partly in consideration of her personal qualities, and as being conversant with foreign languages and usages ; and still more, because, fifteen years before, she had been earnestly recommended to their good offices by the Van der Heldes of the Hague.

Madame Duménil, who had considerably overpassed the limits of a "certain age," had in her youth figured with some distinction at the transitory court of the first king of Holland ; her husband, a gallant Colonel, after-

wards killed at the battle of Leipsig, being attached to the household of Queen Hortense. During her residence at the Hague, she had recommended herself by many excellent qualities to the friendship of the young mother of Adrian ; and, when a premature widowhood left her only a small pension for her subsistence, and shortly afterwards, the fate of Napoleon precipitated into the dust all those who were not adroit, alert, or base enough to make merchandise of their adhesion to the Lilies of the Bourbons, the protection of her former friend had not been wanting.

The name of a "*Veuve d'un Colonel de l'Empire*," has been since as memorably abused by begging-letter impostors and proprietors of Parisian boarding-houses, as, at the commencement of the present century, the name of *émigré* or *ci-devant* by ushers and professors, dancing masters and hair-dressers ;—each of whom was sure to have been a Marquis or Baron in his own country,

previous to the revolution, till confronted with some member of the *Ancienne Noblesse*. But Madame Duménil was the very genuine widow of a very genuine Colonel ; in addition to being a well-meaning, kind-hearted woman. She was, the more the pity, a little affected in her manners ; and appeared almost too ethereal to have been the bosom friend of a Dutchwoman. But this was a superficial fault. In any real emergency, she forgot to be *maniérée*, and was the best creature in the world. She had not, otherwise, been selected by old Zelters as companion to his ward.

It must have been noticed by any one conversant for the last fifty years with the habits of our volatile neighbours on the other side the channel, that although, after one of their volcanic *coups d'état*, a dynasty subsides out of sight, as through the trapdoors of a pantomime, accompanied by all its partisans and adherents, like the host of Pharaoh overwhelmed by the Red Sea, no sooner is the

royal or imperial standard re-established in the land, than upstart the vanished legions, like the nuns in *Robert le Diable* out of their graves. But, till that spirit-stirring event, the poor half-starved creatures remain interred—no one knows where—like the public monuments buried during the Reign of Terror, by the praise-worthy conservatism of Monsieur Lenoir.

From this species of eclipse, poor Madame Duménil had been rescued by the kind hand of Jakes Zelters, for the purpose of attending upon Nannie. It would have been difficult to say what amount of misery she had undergone; so gaunt were her looks, so humbled were her pretensions; for, while the obese elder branch of the Bourbons weighed down the throne of France, it was as great an offence to pronounce in society the vituperated name of “Bonaparte,” as though the great Napoleon had been a convicted felon. Names even collaterally connected with the Empire, were

altogether suppressed. The youth of France was instructed to place in ellipse its fifteen years of military glory ; and the Empire was passed over as mythical. The cypher of Napoleon was effaced from the public monuments ; and the infamous libels of Lewis Goldsmith against the Bonaparte family, were re-translated, re-printed, and re-read.


Poor Madame Duménil was precisely one of those placed under an interdict by these miserable attacks ; and, disowned by such of her friends and relations as pretended to the favour of the court, or toleration in society, she was beginning almost to wonder how and why she still existed, when, having appealed to Jakes Zelters to procure her an appointment as governess in an English family, she had the delight of finding herself solicited to become *dame de compagnie* to a very young English lady of fortune, about to make an extended tour of the Continent.

No time was lost in signifying her grateful

acquiescence, and hastening to England for the commencement of her functions.

But when better acquainted with her, Nannie could not help sometimes wondering what, in her intended capacity of governess, she had purposed to teach. For the only accomplishment she was ever known to practise, was the art of twisting a gauze scarf round her neck, after the aerial fashion, now unattainable, exhibited in Isabey's portraits ; and twitching a tambouring needle up and down, with about the fiftieth part of the perfection of a Glasgow machine.

During their sojourn together at Greenhill Lodge, however, Nannie readily discovered in her the united charm of a gracious temper, and pleasing voice ; endowments the less expected, because a pair of sable eyebrows, and a darkly-shaded upper lip, imparted to her countenance an air of singular ferocity. Nor was the anomaly rendered the less striking by poor Madame Duménil's infatuation for the



tender colours, filmy draperies, and sentimental romances, in vogue at the courts of Malmaison and Navarre.

It was no great mortification to Madame Duménil to find that her young charge did not purpose a lengthened sojourn at Paris, on her road to Italy. Paris had been, and was, a scene of deep humiliation to the Colonel's widow. Nothing remained of her beloved Emperor that could possibly be effaced by the powers that were ;—except a ragged portrait or two, hanging frameless in the brokers' shops of the quays ; and that noble column, in the Place Vendôme, which the fickle French would fain have sacrificed at the Restoration, with all its national memories of heroism, to propitiate the dynasty they were already endeavouring to undermine and discard. She was glad, too, that Miss Balfour did not compel her to make good the rhapsodies in which she had indulged at Stockwell, concerning a certain villa at As-

nières, where the blissful epoch of her life was passed, and which she declared to be twice as Eden-like as Greenhill Lodge. For, never much larger than a rabbit-hutch, it now figured as an *estaminet*, at the sign of "*Le Tapageur*."

The season being already far advanced for the passage of the Rhone, they were to proceed at once to Italy. Rome was selected as their winter quarters. Rome, so often sought as an ark of refuge by those whose pride or affections have suffered from rough contact with the world :—dethroned pretenders—disgraced ministers—baffled intriguers—poets, out of sorts with their critics—or withered beauties, out of sorts with themselves.

The object of Nannie Balfour in making the Papal city her temporary home, was one that she scarcely yet avowed, even to herself. But she was so impatient to be there, that she experienced less gratification than might have been expected from the noble objects of art,


or beautiful sites, which presented themselves in the course of their journey. For the appreciation of the former, indeed, the education of her eye was not sufficiently developed. But to admire the works of nature, every human being is qualified by birthright, through the spark of divine intelligence inherited from the source of all light. It was, therefore, probably, the irritability arising from defeated purposes and disappointed hopes, that incited the young traveller, even amidst the fairest or most imposing landscapes of Italy, still to exclaim, "We are losing time!"

By this constant exhortation to her companions, she managed to arrive before winter set in, at the remote and quiet home already secured for her through the correspondents of Zelters and Co., in the Strada della Longara, within sight of the church of St. Onofrio.

The Rome of fashionable tourists was no object to Nannie. Her deep mourning, her projects, her inclinations, demanded the strictest

retirement. Had the former alone been consulted, she would have arrived and abode in the Eternal City without the notification of her presence to any human being, beyond the banker to whom her letters of credit were addressed. But Mrs. Whittingham had forced upon her letters of introduction to an English family, who, not having obtained in London the consideration they fancied due to their double name and double crest, (coupled with the most deplorable personal and moral insignificance), were parading the Continent with their British Legion of sons and daughters; aiming their dull dinner parties at the head of every traveller of note likely to lend them a helping hand up the toilsome ascent of notoriety.

Nannie, at first, declined. A fashionable family, with even a solitary surname and crest, would have been almost too much for her. But Robert Brent, on whose judgment she had implicit reliance, assured her that in her



unprotected situation, and in a city destitute of an English diplomatic representative, the countenance of her countrypeople might, in some emergency or other, be indispensable.

“Allow me to recommend to your attention my dear Mrs. Warburton Wast,” wrote Mrs. Whittingham, “a *charming* young lady of Scottish extraction my friend Miss Balfour who is about to spend the winter at Rome under the chaperonage of a *distinguished* French woman widow of the late heroic Colonel Duménil any kindness shown to whom the Messrs. Whittingham Lady Mary Whittingham and myself will DEEPLY appreciate She is a ward of my *dear* father and in possession of a CONSIDERABLE fortune.”

This characteristic missive was duly forwarded by Miss Balfour; because she had pledged herself to that effect to her friends in Russell Square. But by private instructions

to Hermann, the old courier, she secured herself against the visits they seemed to solicit. The conventional pretexts of "not at home," or "*pas visible*," were unknown to Nannie; though her bombazine and broad hems afforded, she thought, a sufficient pretext for choosing to be alone. But Mrs. Warburton Wast, who dearly loved to supply new English faces for the admiration of the Monsignori and Purple stockings, with whom it was her pride to crowd her weekly assemblies, was disposed to resent the self-seclusion of one whom she had thought proper to announce, on her own authority, as a beautiful heiress, related to the first families in Scotland. She accordingly dispatched to the "charming young lady of CONSIDERABLE fortune," a card for a formal dinner party, at nearly a month's notice. But Nannie was not to be entrapped; and Mrs. Warburton Wast and her three over-dressed daughters immediately conceived an antipathy to the young stranger, as most imper-


tinently inaccessible, and "probably nobody, after all."

Even Madame Duménil, though expressly forewarned that the young person as whose *dame de compagnie* she was to officiate, would lead a life of seclusion, began to think it hard that, in the midst of a city like Rome, and of a season like the Carnival, not a soul was to enter their gate but masters and professors. At Miss Balfour's age, *she* had been three years a wife, and was playing a brilliant part in the private theatricals and public pageants of Queen Hortense; pastimes, she thought, better suited to the May-day of life, than perpetual study and unmitigated solitude. "If her dear Meess," she wrote home to old Zelters, "so rich and so attractive, were educating herself for a finishing governess, she could not be more devoted to her lessons."

The venerable Netherlander was not the man to object to industry, bodily or intellectual. Nor did he discern a fault in that

reverence to a father's memory, which sufficed to alienate his interesting ward from the pleasures of the world. But he was not quite so well pleased to learn that, in addition to the professors of languages and painting to whose lessons Miss Balfour devoted her time, were superadded the instructions of a certain Abbate Bartolomeo, one of the professors at the *Collegio di Propaganda Fide*; a learned Jesuit, who came, ostensibly, to impart archæological and numismatic lore, but by far the larger half of whose lectures was devoted to the exposition of the doctrines of the Catholic church.

It did not much surprise the old merchant. He had often feared that her intimacy with the Lanvilles and the Jesuit-reared son of Mrs. Varnham, would tend to disturb her religious convictions. But it never occurred to a mind far more occupied with his commerce of "dry goods and tobaccos" than with the morbid sensibility of boys and girls, whom his daugh-



ter Brent comprehended under the generic head of green geese, that all the studies and labours of her whom he coveted as a daughter-in-law, purported only to surprise and delight the said "Jesuit-reared son of Mrs. Varnham," on his return from the East, or wherever else he might be sojourning.

On learning that Miss Balfour seemed likely to enlist under the banners of a church which to *him* were as the ensigns of perdition, he thought it his duty, indeed, to remonstrate. But to that portion of her guardian's letter, Nannie returned no answer. Not because she was of opinion that one whose authority related only to the control of her Dutch bonds and long annuities, ought to restrain his communication within columns ruled in red ink, and headed with £ s. d. But because, her inclinations and opinions being still at variance, she would not do injustice to so true a friend by an inconclusive reply.

The anxieties of Madame Duménil, there-


fore, remained unabated. Born a year or two previous to the outbreak of the first Revolution, she was by no means *dévoté*. It was not (as she explained to Nannie, as lightly as though discussing a new bonnet) the fashion of her day.

In *her* eyes the tricoloured beaver of the Abbate Bartolomeo was as out of place as that of Don Basile, in Beaumarchais' comedy. That her young charge, born of Protestant parents in a Protestant country, should take it into her head to "*s'enfoncer dans ce vilain monde des Jesuites,*" was "*pire qu'un vice—c'est à dire, un ridicule !*"

Her patroness-protégée did not oppose her opinions—did not even reply to her insinuations; but simply acted on her own right of independence. The Abbate maintained his ground, and continued his theological lessons,

So deep in knowledge, that few lines could
sound

Or plumb the bottom of that vast profound ;



With nice distinctions glossing o'er the text,
Obscure in meaning, and with words perplex'd,

With subtleties on subtleties refin'd,
Meant to divide and subdivide the mind.

How dangerous for the simple soul of a
girl of nineteen. How different from the
apostolic teaching of the good old Pairson!—

CHAPTER VI.

UNDER this complete subversion of her authority, Madame Duménil exhibited such cheerful good humour, that Miss Balfour almost reproached herself for her contumacy. But it was as impossible for her to submit to the government of her frivolous companion, as for the wheel to allow the fly perched upon it, to regulate its movements. Not that Nannie was grown self-conceited. Readily did she put herself to school to those who were qualified to teach. But she had been hitherto fortunate in advisers ; in the ghostly wisdom of the good old Pairson—the practical sense of Jakes Zelters—the feminine graces of neighbour Varnham—

and the exalted genius of cousin Ely ;—and how, after *them*, could she bow to the judgment of a feather-brained Parisian, who, though she excelled in courtly curtseys, and recited an anecdote with piquant tact, not only found this barren world enough for bliss, but found equal delight in its chickweed and its roses.

The superannuated butterfly was nevertheless so gay and harmless, it was so consolatory to a heart wounded like Nannie's yet disposed to conceal its wounds, to find the fluttering wings and meally texture conceal no latent sting, that she endeavoured by every means in her power to gratify such tastes on the part of Madame Duménil, as did not militate against her own projects of retirement. A *salon* was assigned her, where she might at all times entertain her friends, on condition that the quiet sitting-room of her charge was never invaded.

With one exception, however. A withered little maiden lady, who, after figuring at Paris,

in her youth, in the household of the Empress Josephine, had, on the dispersion of the Bonaparte family, found refuge in Rome, as a hanger-on upon the daughters of the Prince de Canino, was occasionally invited to her tea-table. For Mademoiselle St. Martin was poor and neglected; and a gossip with her old friend and playfellow over their palmy days of the Elysée and the Tuileries, was manna in her desert. When not required as a duenna in the opera-box, or *souffre douleur* in the airings of Princess G., the occupation of poor old Anatolie was to nurse a dowagerly Pomeranian dog, which had been wheezing for the last five years with a quarter of a lung, in an attic ten feet square, warmed by a chafing-dish; and Miss Balfour was assured by Madame Duménil that it was an act of charity to comfort her poor kinswoman by a good fire, and a cup of *thé de Caravane*.

Amazing how soon, under its influence, the two old ladies grew young again. How they

chirruped of fêtes and fashions; of the little squabbles, for precedence, in the early Napoleonic court, where everybody was making believe to be somebody; where the tribe of Beauharnais and the race of La Pagerie looked down on the tribe of the Bonapartes as ennobled *bourgeois*; and the tribe of Bonaparte looked down upon the more fastidious pretenders who despised them, as *ci-devants* and creoles; how, with that aptitude for humiliating and thwarting their fellow-creatures which seems to be the most uneradicable of our original sins, every day had produced some pungent retort or biting *bon-mot*, among the fry of human minnows of which Napoleon was the Triton:—stimulating feuds and jealousies almost as harassing to the great man as the management of that gigantic *Chasse aux Rois*, of which Europe was the hunting-ground, and himself the *Grand Veneur*.

While the two volatile old ladies chattered, argued, and recounted the history of the Im-

perial Court (an edition abridged, of course, for the use of schools—for, to their credit be it spoken, Frenchwomen exhibit scrupulous respect to the ears of girlhood), Miss Balfour sat by and listened, as if they had been two old fairies consulting together, crutch in hand, in a fairytale. They talked, indeed, quite as familiarly of diamonds and pearls as big as hazel-nuts,—of tiny equipages, fanciful costumes,—emperors, kings, princes, dukes, counts, barons,—all the gilt gingerbread of improvisated sovereignty. To the simple child of rude Lancashire Dalesfolk it sounded so unreal! And what else had it proved? What remained of it? In the century we live in, the Eastern apologue of the palace and caravanserai has been exceeded. Modern Palaces resemble patent theatres; which successive royal managers fill with elaborate machinery, glittering puppets, and gaudy scenes, only that themselves may become bankrupt, and their properties be carted away, and sold for a song!

It was pleasant, however, to Nannie, to find intermixed with these descriptions of plumed toques and laméd tunics, anecdotes of the singleness of purpose and rectitude of mind, the warm-heartedness and soft-heartedness of the great Napoleon, whom that mendacious organ, the public voice, still affected to describe as devoid of all bowels of compassion ; and whom the world has since learned to recognise as one who, like Lucifer son of the morning, might have been a spirit of light, but for the overweening ambition which hurled him down into darkness.

She liked, too, to hear of the whimsical taste which governed the laborious trifling of those gorgeous days ; the celebrated quadrille, devised for the amusement of Queen Hortense, in which the dancers were habited like the pieces of a game of chess ;—the hunting-parties at Raincy, where the beauties of the court followed the chase, some attired as amazons in *habits de chasse à la Louis XIV.*, some as

élégantes, in tiny pony-phaetons and chip bonnets; the little old gossips interchanging hints of how each of them had triumphed on such occasions; and what charming little compliments and exquisite bouquets and bon-bons had been lavished on them by such eaters of hearts as Canouville, Septeuil, Ségur, and the two Charleses, de Flahault and Lagrange—names which they evidently considered of European reputation, and as nobly illustrative of the Napoleonic era, as those of Denon, David, Cuvier, Talma, Lannes, Savary, Mar-mont, or Berthier.

How true, alas! the trite saying, that one half the world knows not how the other half lives! How little had Nannie Balfour dreamed, in her dairy at Gridlands, that amidst the terrible wars which desolated Europe, Paris had revelled unceasingly in the base enjoyment of finery, gluttony, and all other costly ostentations, by which, according to the shallow calculations of po-

litical economists, we grease the axles of Trade,—that car of Jaggernaut of the modern world.

“But how,” she could not help inquiring, one day, of the little, wrinkled, coquettish blonde, Anatolie St. Martin, “how, when news was reaching you of the carnage of Leipsig, or later, of that terrible retreat from Moscow,—how could you have the heart to persist in your masked balls, or festivities at the Hotel de Ville?”

“Because it was *his* pleasure,” exclaimed both Madame Duménil and her dear Anatolie, for once unanimous. “There was but one will in Paris—that of the Emperor. It was his command that the court should appear free from care or anxiety, and we consequently entertained none.”

The young recluse of the Strada della Longara, whose ear, since she arrived on the continent, had caught some rumour of the dislocated state of the *chose publique* around the

tottering throne of the elder Bourbons, could not help forming an opinion that France would never again be reduced to the state of semicatalepsy alone capable of subduing its volcanic elements, and thereby securing public order and private prosperity, unless by the despotism of a master-spirit, as potent and as remarkable for its *Vielseitigkeit* as that of Napoleon Bonaparte—and equally unscrupulous.

But what most surprised her, was the moderate share exercised by the human affections throughout the vicissitudes deplored by the two old worldlings. Madame Duménil often alluded to the shock she had received on learning the death of her Colonel,—a man so distinguished,—a man who in so short a time had made his way ;—who, if he had survived a few months, would have been a General of Brigade, and, if a few years, probably a Field Marshal ;—a man brave as his sword, and universally esteemed.

It was not difficult for Miss Balfour to express her sympathy in such a loss.

“But then,” added she, “I had such consolations!—The Empress wrote me, with her own hand, a letter of condolence!—The Emperor despatched to me Duroc, his favourite aide-de-camp, to say that the widow of his faithful Duménil should always command his sympathy. After that, *who* would not have been consoled!”

On the other hand, Mademoiselle St. Martin appeared to have been as easily comforted for the loss of her *fiancé*, as the widow for that of her Colonel: a young *savant*, carried off by the yellow fever in a scientific mission to the Antilles. At a subsequent reception of the *Académie des Sciences*, at the Tuileries, Napoleon had pronounced, in a few blunt words, the eulogy of the defunct.—“Had he survived,” added the withered little spinster, “he would have had the *croix d’honneur*, and an appointment as *Bibliothécaire*, either at the

Arsenal or some other of the imperial libraries ; and, alas ! I should not have been reduced to nurse for my subsistence a superannuated lapdog."

Such appeared to be her only motive for deploring the lost lover of her youth !

But "might she not be as blameable as themselves," Miss Balfour sometimes asked herself, (with the morbid self-scrutinising spirit of one ill at ease in her mind, or insecure in her faith,) "for assigning too much importance to the affections as a motive of human action, as they for assigning too little?—Was she justified in having devoted the best years of her life to the influence of a passion, whose mastery over her feelings no exorcism appeared to affect?"

In vain did she endeavour to divert her mind by listening to the gossip of Madame Duménil and poor old Anatolie, as other women to the unmeaning twittering of a canary in a cage. In vain did she attempt to elevate her thoughts

to the lofty level of the mystic doctrines propounded by the Abbate. Still, whether listening to the flowery reminiscences of the two old Frenchwomen, or the solemn expositions of the plausible Jesuit, she was unable to afford them more than the semblance of attention. From herself, she could not disguise that her hope of obtaining spiritual enlightenment, arose from the expectation of uniting, at some future time, her faith with that of Maurice; or that the accomplishments to which she aspired, purported only to obtain the applause of that rich and deep-toned voice, which came back upon her memory amid the watches of the night, startling her from sleep like the booming of a distant tocsin.—Humiliating consciousness!—to be not only a slave, but the slave of a shadow.

But while thus reasoning with herself concerning her soul's weakness, the crafty priest to whom her foot of clay had been unwillingly exposed, spared no pains to turn the discovery to account.

Aware that Miss Balfour received no visits, it was useless to propose the negociation of an acquaintance between her and certain venerable Roman *Principesse*, faithful daughters of the true church, and mothers, sisters, or favourites of Eminences or Monsignori, whom he had often found potent auxiliaries in cases of conversion. But he had little difficulty in persuading his charming pupil to attend, accompanied by Madame Duménil, those imposing Easter ceremonies at St. Peter's, to which our sight-seeing country-people are only too apt to rush, as to a new opera, or public execution.

The Colonel's widow was enchanted at obtaining even this concession to what she called the claims of society ; for in the august mysteries of an ancient faith, Madame Duménil saw only an assemblage of well-dressed people. In all countries, may be found a species of religious dissipation ; from the camp meetings of America to the " Pious Orgies " of Exeter Hall ;—from the fashionable con-

venticles of Belgravia, where noble lords, smitten with the ambition of expounding what they utterly misunderstand,


—rush in, where Bishops fear to tread,—

to the Paschal ceremonies of Jerusalem or Moscow, or the Holy Week at St. Peter's.

For some time after the re-opening of the continent, the proceedings of English travellers, on the latter occasion, used to consist of an unmeaning display of vulgar, noisy curiosity, much resembling that of the House of Commons when bursting like schoolboys into the Lords, to listen to a speech from the throne. But since Catholic Emancipation gave the signal for conversion or perversion to such unquiet spirits as, weary of the simple worship of their forefathers, are tempted to retrograde into the errors of the dark ages, and revive delusions exploded by the ordeal of the printing press, Rome keeps a careful eye on such wonder-mongering travellers as appear

most accessible to the dramatic exposition of her mysteries,—her lugubrious Miserere, and Calvaries of pasteboard :—aware that the most logical tract, or eloquent homily, is powerless compared with the incense, lustral water, and gorgeous processions, which she borrowed from the ritual of the Pagan to disfigure the simplicity of primitive Christianity ; just as the ceremony of kissing the toe of his Holiness was copied from the court ceremonies of Caligula.

In our own time, the increasing influence of her altars has created a sort of jealous rivalry among those whose faith is fluttering ; a rivalry as of courtiers elbowing each other to obtain a riband, or a pension ; and scandals the most malicious are circulated in the city of that infallible Potentate, of whom it was said by Voltaire, that there was no danger in saluting his toe so long as we were able to fetter his hands. Spiteful letters are despatched home by English gossips, cer-



tifying which of their country-people have been escorted by Monsignore this, or have dined with Cardinal the other, or been seen in conference with the Regent of the Apostolic Chancery.

At the epoch of Miss Balfour's sojourn, this unholy inquisition was already established. People were beginning to watch to whom the best places were assigned for the ceremonies in St. Peter's; as they would have watched in Paris, at a *première représentation*, the occupants of an *avant scène*. When it was observed that the honours of the day devolved, as far as the Great British were concerned, on a simply-attired girl in deep mourning, attended by her *gouvernante*, and a dry-looking, middle-aged baronet, dressed like Harley in a popular farce, it was settled that *they* were to be the great converts of the year.

Poor Sir Ralph Barnardiston, foiled in all his previous speculations, was in truth a candidate for the benefits of conversion. He

would have been thankful to the most insignificant Jesuit going, to undertake him. But his modes of living were too strictly in accordance with the amount of his letter of credit on Torlonia, to afford much temptation. Even the Catholic church could not afford to charter a fishing-vessel (for men) in order to land a minnow.

It was otherwise with Miss Balfour. As in all cases where a marriageable person is concerned, her fortune had been enormously exaggerated. Most English people who possess more than the means of maintenance, are considered on the Continent as *millionnaires*; and, thanks to the inflated representations of Mademoiselle St. Martin, and the tribe of Warburton Wast, Miss Balfour passed in Rome for what she really was in Middledale,—an heiress.

Which of us has not witnessed the influence of that name, in attracting followers and parasites? And if so potential as to

beautify ugliness, and rejuvenise middle age, in the case of a beautiful girl of nineteen, the attraction was indeed superlative. Poor Nannie was almost terrified by the curiosity she excited, when respectfully conducted by her Abbate to the prominent seats secured for herself and Madame Duménil. Had it been still in her power, she would gladly have escaped from the well-dressed crowd, whose gaping, staring, and whispering, is so much more offensive than the open-mouthed wonder of a mob.

“*Remets toi, mon enfant,*” whispered Madame Duménil, by no means certain, however, whether the murmur of applause that greeted them, was addressed to her own fashionable bonnet, or the sweet pale face, rendered almost as indistinguishable by a black crape veil as by the coif of a nun. And great was her joy when her young charge, whom she was beginning to believe as friendless in the world as though she had slid down from Heaven like

a shooting star, was suddenly accosted by two persons as well placed as themselves : *i. e.* the man of many missions, and a young, pretty, and fashionably-dressed female, whose desire to salute Miss Balfour with a holy kiss, in scriptural fashion, was only too apparent.

Even Nannie, however, was at a loss to account for this violent demonstration of affection : so totally had she forgotten a certain Rose Pierce, one of her Manchester school-fellows, who, belonging to the *haute aristocratie* of the cotton world, had always looked down with condescension on the niece of Hildyard and Co. For even Manchester has its *crème de la crème*. The Holy Roman Empire must not pretend to the exclusive monopoly of impertinence.


The Pierces, possessed of a house that vied with Greenhill Lodge in forcing-houses and conservatories, and far exceeded it in the display of pictures and plate, had refused to sanction the friendship struck up by their

pretty daughter with the niece of "people" who, in the memory of man, and even of child, had belonged to the retail trade of Manchester. For wholesale and retail confer, in certain localities, the same personal distinction, as in the courts of kings, the precedence of Dukes, Viscounts, or Knights of the Garter; forming, what the Emperor of the French, when he was still the clever fellow called Louis Napoleon, was pleased to denominate "the Hierarchy of a Democracy."

But Rose, at once sweet and blooming as became the name she bore, had never forgotten the demure little friend who, though a year or two younger than herself, had so often guided her through the intricacies of Punic or Lancastrian wars; or even athwart the immensities of the solar system or milky way. Nannie Balfour, who had "done" half her lessons for her, and shared her whole heart, remained as dear as though she had not been a farmer's daughter, or a clothier's niece.

In spite of parental prohibition, Rose had made secret inquiries as to the cause of her unexpected non-return ; but after ascertaining that the sudden death of her mother was for the future to detain Nannie at home, she could learn nothing further. The Hildyards, having quitted Manchester for the South, were settled, as her Pacolet informed her, "som'as about Bristol Hotwells, for the benefit and edication of young Master H."

Her dear Nannie consequently remained for Rose Pierce as intangible as any other of the pleasures of memory. She knew not her address ; and had she known it, correspondence was prohibited between the daughter of a cotton-spinner employing two thousand hands and entertaining Members of Parliament at his table, and the daughter of an illiterate farmer, employing a couple of plough-boys ; and in process of time, after shining as the belle of a music-meeting and a winter of public balls, Rose Pierce became the happy



and envied wife of the eldest son of one of those cotton lords, who are rapidly converting Manchester into a second capital.

A year's travel having been injudiciously sanctioned by parental authority to the young couple, in order to settle their love and unsettle their minds, Mrs. George Stodart was enjoying its last few weeks at Rome, and exhibiting at St. Peter's a gorgeous pelisse of velvet and fur, and a pink bonnet plumed like the head of a Peruvian ; when, lo ! she caught sight of a quiet little Englishwoman, who proved to be the object of her girlish friendship, and subsequent dreams.—Tears of joy were still glittering in her eyes, when, after incoherently announcing her marriage, she presented her dear George to the acquaintance of her dear Nannie.

Dear George, however, a provincial dandy of the first flagrancy, out of whom a university education had been insufficient to winnow the natural vulgarity, was far from sharing his

wife's exultation. Vexed that, in the midst of the unconcealed admiration excited by her beauty and false air of fashion, she should dethrone herself by such vehement demonstrations of intimacy with a shabby-looking little nobody, dressed after the pattern of the nursery-governess of his younger sisters, not even the sweet smile bestowed upon him from under that quizzical black bonnet could disarm his disgust. Of what use for him to push his way into fashionable clubs, or attempt that of his lovely wife into diplomatic soirées, if she showed so little tact as to rout out every discreditable acquaintance she had formed in the *mélée* of a Manchester boarding-school ! *He* had carried off from Harrow and Oriel, if not prizes and premiums, a bowing-acquaintance with half-a-dozen honourables, and a baronet ; nay, was even privileged, or fancied himself so, to address Lord Bernard Bruce as "Bruce" by itself, "Bruce," whenever he ran against him in a railway-station.—"It would never

do, however—they should never get on in society—if Rose was always to be putting on the drag by harking back to nobodies.”

But it was in vain that, by nudges of the elbow and expressive jerks of the head, he endeavoured to detach his simple wife from her humble friend, and force her into a more prominent position.—Rose was as elated as any other happy child. Of all the thousands who that day crowded the most gorgeous of modern temples, or, as it might be more appropriately termed, the most gorgeous Palace of the Almighty wherein enlightened Christendom is proud to compete with the barbaric worship of Benares, Mexico, or Peru, the individual who, even more than His Holiness himself, engrossed the sympathies of Mrs. George Stodart, was the Nannie who had corrected her Italian exercises, and mended rents in her torn frocks.

The consequence was, that throughout the ceremony of the morning, whose variegated

splendours appeared to create in the grand old cathedral an interminglement of suns and rainbows, the countenance of the Manchester beau remained black as night. There was young Lord Garstang, the clever son of the great Earl of Mardyke, looking on, with whom, at Oxford, he had kept up a hunting-field acquaintance, by the interchange of a few words (two out of three being oaths) as they followed each other through some ugly gap, and whose eye he had been endeavouring to catch for the chance of recognition ; and what hope of such an honour, so long as his wife was seen in familiar conference with snobs !

When at length the ceremony of the day came to a conclusion, when the incense was dying away, and the promiscuous throng pressing with indecent tumult along the aisles to call for carriages, on such occasions never to be found, the conjugal storm preparing for her began to growl in the ears of poor Rose ; hurried on against her will, in order

to distance her insignificant friends, and their seedy escort in the three-cornered hat. When, suddenly, she found herself detained by a hand, laid gently upon her velvet sleeve, and on turning round, found, to her dismay, that Miss Balfour, closely following her, had probably overheard her dear George's sharp allusions to "nobodies," and "the vulgarity of greetings in the market-place."—Nor did dear George appear much inclined to moderate his animadversions, on perceiving that "those people seemed resolved to stick to them for the day."

"I have been endeavouring to keep up with you, Rose," said Nannie's gentle voice, "in order to present to you and Mr. Stodart, an English gentleman, Sir Ralph Barnardiston, who is anxious to make your acquaintance."

Miss Balfour was careful not to say, as is too often rashly said on such occasions, "my friend" Sir Ralph : for towards no one did she feel less friendly.—She would even have added

a word or two expressive of her regret that his importunity rendered the introduction inevitable. But the baronet was too near for more than the mutual namings and bows, that purported to unite in friendship the man of many missions and the velvet pelisse and well-cut paletôt, which, to his sagacious eye, announced corn, wine, and oil in the territory of their wearers.

Had not Miss Balfour been too much in fear of being parted in the crowd from Madame Duménil and the Abbate, to bestow much heed on this little episode, she could not but have remarked the sudden transition from dark to light in the countenance of Rose's husband, like summer lightning gleaming from a thunder-cloud.

The truth was, that the tall Englishman in the straight-cut black coat which Sir Ralph had assumed as the badge of his new mission, had long been known to George Stodart by sight, at the Torlonia soirées and diplomatic

receptions. At first, he had fancied him a travelling Fellow of All Souls ; next, a missionary, high in the confidence of no matter what church. But was this vocation reconcilable with his whispers to cardinals, and congees to the *Maestro di Camera* of the Papal See ?—

That morning he had noticed the mysterious stranger conducting the French ambassador to her place ; and was beginning to wonder whether he might not be one of the incognito kings, or their still greater ministers, against whom he had been, to his infinite delight, occasionally jostled in the course of his continental tour, when his self-sought introduction, under the title of Sir Ralph Barnardiston, resolved the doubts of the delighted cotton prince.

He heard of Sir Ralph, indeed, for the first time. He might be a Nova Scotia baronet, or K.G.B., or even a be-knighted sheriff.— But having seen him on speaking terms with

Lord Garstang, smiled upon by an ambassador, and tolerated by one of the most important of those ecclesiastical princes whom the Manchester gent facetiously denominated the "Old Hats," his acquaintance was evidently a thing to be thankful for.

Scarcely had cards been exchanged between them, when he proposed to Rose to invite to dinner the friend of her friend; to meet the Warburton Wasts, and what he called the "erleet" of their acquaintance.

"And Nannie!" cried his wife, overjoyed. "It will be just the opportunity to show some attention to my dear Nannie."

"If you want to be civil to her, ask her and the old Frenchwoman here, some day, when we are alone," remonstrated her husband. "You could not possibly invite two women whom we meet nowhere, to make the acquaintance of so fastidious a person as Mrs. Warburton Wast!"

"Nannie is fifty times more ladylike than

the Warburton Wasts.—As to Madame Duménil, she was formerly in the household of the French Queen of Holland.”

“ Nonsense !—How *could* there be a French Queen of Holland !—She has just the look of a superannuated actress, and is, probably, little better.”

“ But her late husband was a Colonel of Napoleon’s Guard !”

“ And do you really think I would bring any one connected with those despicable adventurers, poisoners, and plunderers, into contact with Mrs. Warburton Wast, who is such a favourite at the court of Charles X., and invited to all the Duchesse de Berri’s private balls?—It would be a downright insult !”

“ But Nannie Balfour did not serve in Napoleon’s army. An acquaintance with *her* would not injure the interests of Mrs. Wast—”

“ Mrs. Warburton Wast—”

—“ Warburton Wast, with the Duchesse de Berri or Charles X.—Do pray let me invite her.”

“As you please. Write and ask her, if you like. But I wash my hands of it. If the Warburton Wasts should cut us in consequence—”

Rose did not answer. She was deep in her note of invitation to Miss Balfour.

CHAPTER VII.

“ROBERT and I are far from easy about you, my dear little friend,” wrote Mrs. Brent, shortly after the foregoing adventure.—“ We hear shocking reports of the Strada della Longara. There is a foolish Mrs. .W W. (the name is not worth writing at full length), a correspondent of my sister Cordelia, who protests that wherever you go, a flight of crows, alias Jesuits, alight around you; and that there can be little doubt of your speedy conversion to Catholicism.—If this should come to pass, take notice that you shall figure in effigy, next fifth of November, in the centre of Russell

Square ; and my pickle son, Arthur, shall set fire to the tar-barrel !

“ Better have stayed at home, Nannie, among your well-wishers. You might have studied Ancient Rome in Piranesi, or the mouldy fragments of a Stilton cheese ; instead of destroying on the spot your classical illusions. But while *you* have been incurring the criticisms of Mrs. W. W., I, the home-stayer, have made a charming acquaintance. Why never inform me that you have the honour to be cousin to the E. H., whose initials are becoming nearly as renowned as those of H. B. ? With most people, the said E. H. passes for a myth. All men of mark and likelihood read his pamphlets—(tracts for the law-makers, Robert Brent calls them). But every one ascribes the authorship to his pet philosopher. I have heard named Brougham, Peel, Bulwer, Carlyle, Copplestone, Jeffrey, Jeremy Bentham, Albany Fonblanque, and a dozen others, as the real original E. H. And, after all, this Great

Unknown turns out to be a shadow of a man, diaphanous as a Sèvres coffee-cup, who is endeavouring to sun himself into vitality at Clifton, out of reach of the stir of life, or the breath of fame. And to your kinsmanship with this great writer, Nannie, you have never once alluded !

“ Business, seldom so pleasant a mediator, brought him to our house. Some time ago, Mr. Hildyard purchased a considerable estate in Berkshire ; and my husband was consulted by Zelters and Son concerning the title. Within these few weeks, some sort of legal demur having rendered him a little uneasy, Mr. Hildyard thought fit to visit London for a consultation with Robert ; who, charmed with the intelligence and gentle manners of his client, invited him to dinner—an Englishman’s readiest mode of saying ‘ I like you.’

“ It happened, as it often does, that several first-rate men were that day our guests ; and though middle-aged lawyers are a little too apt to pooh-pooh the abilities of a talker, or even

listener, who has not cut his wisdom teeth, one and all were in favour of the young man to whose pale, gentle face they at once applied the comparison so often made with Shelley's and Byron's, to an alabaster lamp. After dinner, just before I left the room, some allusion was made to the last essay of E. H. on Penal Colonisation. Some praised it—some abused it. One called it the splendid error of a man of genius; another declared it to be revolutionary and dangerous.

“ ‘ I had rather have written it than Junius's Letters,’ cried Robert Brent. — ‘ Whoever E. H. may be, he is one of the shining lights of this generation, and not the less edifying for being hid under a bushel. We have all reason to be grateful to him. It was a grand boast of the ancient king; that he had found Rome of clay, and left it marble. But a man like E. H. accomplishes something more glorious, if he leave mankind the better and happier for his counsels. A rich inheritance

to confer on posterity! The reforms suggested by him have been gradually adopted in every prison and penitentiary in the kingdom. The county magistrates, usually so inaccessible to reason, are beginning to swear by E. H.!

"Everybody present confirmed this statement. Each had some illustrative anecdote to afford. Your cousin alone was mute.

"'I trust your silence is no symptom of dissent, Mr. Hildyard?' said Robert Brent, fearing that the conversation was taking too serious a turn for one probably better up in *Lalla Rookh* and the Scotch novels, than in *Prison Discipline* or the regeneration of Lunatic Asylums. "I should be sorry to find, as you are about to adopt the life of a country gentleman in right earnest, that you are opposed to the opinions of E. H."

"No one, I believe, has argued them over more patiently," said he, with a look, half-pleased, half-guilty. "I ought, perhaps, to have stopped you long ago. I ought to have de-

clared myself at once. Be lenient with the vanity of human nature, which tempted me to sit and listen to praises such as I little anticipated would ever fall to my share.—*My* name is Elisha Hildyard.—My initials are E. H.’

“I leave you to guess whether the previous applause was moderated by this modest disclosure. But this *rara avis*, who, writes like Courier, and thinks like St. Vincent de Paule, did not tarry long among his votaries. He soon followed me to the tea-table, to inquire after my father’s ward, and thank me for what he was pleased to call my just appreciation of her.—*Your* praises seemed to gratify him, Nannie, far more than the golden opinions conceded to himself. But the reports of your Romish tendencies seem to shock and grieve him, more than they surprised.

“His mother, it seems, has fallen into a state of childishness; and this man of iron intellect attends her like the tenderest of nurses.—He is preparing to build on his new

property, but will not reside there during the old lady's lifetime. 'I should hate any house,' he says, 'where I had seen her breathe her last.—My new home will, I trust, be free from painful associations.'

"What a man!—Already, with the maternal foresight of which most mothers become guilty the moment their eldest daughter takes to plaiting her hair, I have marked him down as a husband for Nina. But what do you think of Robert's pretending, on the strength of a hint given him by my dear old father, that E. H. is a rejected suitor of yours, and still your devoted idolator!

"In that case, I say, more strenuously than ever,—why, *why* couldn't you stay at home?

"Your affectionate friend,

"H. BRENT."

Nannie's "affectionate friend H. Brent" had certainly afforded her "food for meditation," not perhaps "e'en to madness," but certainly

even to a very uneasy frame of mind. In the first place, what business had these W. W.s to make her the subject of their idle gossip? She had never molested *them*, never intruded on their society. They were not entitled to bear witness against her. Why endeavour to injure her with her English friends?

Already, be it observed, Nannie was beginning to resent as an injury the imputation that she was about to enter the Catholic church. Her sojourn in Rome had, in fact, operated upon her mind in a manner precisely contrary to the usual influence of the place. English residents of the highest class, courting or forced into association with Italians of the highest class, and finding themselves in those lofty palaces and among those bigoted arch-nobles, still tacitly repudiated as heretics, and regarded nearly as abhorrently as when the Holy Inquisition kept its racks and stakes and thumb-screws in perpetual readiness, gradually incline their hearts to the enervating influence

of such an atmosphere. The wild elephant is marched off between two tame ones. By conversion to the Catholic church, the only obstacle to Lady Facile Princeps's intimacy with the Prince or Princess Ludovico Pallavicini is removed; while, as a Papist, the lovely daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Snooks may wed with a Duke Orsino, like Olivia in the play; every thing is "made pleasant" by the interposition of some able Jesuit, possessed of a talent for winding up spiritual accounts.

But it is not so with persons who sit aloof from external pressure; seeking enlightenment from above, and not daring to trifle with the means of their soul's salvation. Poor Nannie had arrived in Rome, desiring to be convinced that all she had heard of the mysteries of the Christian faith from the lips of her first and only love, was more authentic than the simple expositions of the good old Pairson. She *wanted* a bridge to be thrown over the great

gulf that divided her from Maurice. Once thrown, her foot, timid as it was, would have trodden steadily over the abyss.

But this purpose was unachieved. Doctrines which, expounded by her young companion, with the aid of his commanding voice and earnest eyes, amid the broomy thickets or purple moors of Middledale,—its summer breezes freshening her brow as she listened,—the twilight skies lending the impressive illustration of their brightening stars to his representation of the promises of his faith and superior holiness of his church,—had stirred her inmost soul,—lost half their augustness when enounced by the crabbed logic of the Abbate Bartolomeo; whose voice resembled the creakings of an ill-greased cart-wheel, and who illustrated his arguments with a finger outstretched in the attitude of a Neapolitan charm; the vehemence of which digital eloquence served to scatter volumes of snuff upon her writing table. Never was human

being less qualified by nature for the task of proselytism than the poor Abbate.

His very manner was aggravating. His mode of assertion prompted opposition. A predisposition to mistrust the sanctity of a creed so harshly and arrogantly interpreted, deprived his arguments of all moral influence.

Even the imposing grandeurs of the Romish ritual had for once proved unimpressive. The united triumph of all that the arts have produced of greatest and most effective,—*chefs-d'œuvre* of architecture, sculpture, painting, music,—were defeated by that tendency to stage-effect which becomes contemptible when connected with the supreme glories of Religion. Accustomed to derive *her* testimony of the greatness of God from the uprising and down-setting of the sun, her incense from the breath of nature, her conception of His terrors from the mountain storm, of His goodness from the plenteousness of the created earth, of His choir from the warble of the woods, the murmur of

the stream,—the winking lamps of cathedrals, the squeaking treble of human choristers, the deep diapason of rumbling organs and double drums, appeared to the simple mind of Nannie almost profane :—a vulgar parody of the pure and simple grandeur which had hitherto served to exalt her fervent aspirations.

The most earnest appeal of cousin Ely could not have produced a stronger revulsion of feeling than those tawdry exhibitions at St. Peter's; those displays of brocade and lace, of tinsel, gems, and tapestry, more suitable to the worship of Mumbo Jumbo, or the Delhai Lama, than to the God of all goodness, whose word was preached in the wilderness by one whose raiment was of camels' hair, and whose food, locusts and wild honey.

Had she not reason, therefore, to be displeased at finding herself represented to those whose good opinion she valued, as the victim of Jesuitical machination and of her own weakness?

More startling, however, though far more satisfactory, was the information imparted by Mrs. Brent relative to the renown of E. H. It was incredible. It was impossible. Such a spirit as was universally ascribed to that great social reformer, must have rent asunder the slender frame of cousin Ely! Like Alfonso's ghost in the Castle of Otranto, its expansion would have laid in ruins the structure it inhabited. That infirm boy, by whose couch she had so often watched,—that gentle youth, whose feeble voice had so often recited to her the lyrics of Mrs. Hemans, or the stanzas of Macauley,—*he*, an authority on prison discipline, on the reformation of criminals, the management of lunatics? Mrs. Brent, in one of her fits of wayward eccentricity, must have resolved to hoax and mislead her.

While still musing over the letter, her perplexities concerning which would have been as insolvable by the aid of poor Madame

Duménil as if she had addressed herself for counsel to one of the carved caryatides supporting the architrave of her chamber door, a cheerful voice saluted her ear, and her friend Rose was by her side—when they were alone together, always “Rose;” when they met in public under the observation of the Manchester dandy, “Mrs. George Stodart.”

“You must not be angry with me for coming so early, Nannie,” said she, throwing herself breathless into a seat. “George is out with the hounds; and I wanted to make sure of you during his absence. I was half afraid, yesterday, dearest, that I should never have an opportunity of seeing you again.”

“Do you leave Rome, then, so soon?” inquired the unsuspecting Nannie.

“Oh, no! We have our apartments for some weeks longer.”

“I shall be here at least as long!” rejoined Miss Balfour. “What is the impediment to our meeting?”

"Simply my husband's caprice. George allows himself to be guided by any body and every body, instead of listening to reason."

"By reason, meaning yourself."

"In this case, yes! What can he possibly have to say against you? And why deny me the society of the only person in Rome for whom I have the smallest regard? I do not interfere with *his* infatuation for the Warburton Wasts or Lord Garstang."

"Do you mean," said Miss Balfour, reddening, "that Mr. Stodart entertains some objection to your intimacy with me? Then why, dear Rose, are you here?"

"Because I can't help it—because I love you with all my heart," cried the affectionate girl, snatching up the hand of Nannie, and covering it with kisses. "I feel so lonesome in Italy, away from papa and mamma, and my brothers and sisters; and, till I met you, Nannie Balfour, and heard English spoken once more by a voice to which I was ac-

customed, I was miserable in Rome—yes, miserable! Pictures, statues, antiquities, festivals—what are they all to me? And now, because I have found an old friend, with whom I can talk and think, and feel—”

The climax was supplied by a copious burst of tears.

Miss Balfour had acquired from poor Eugénie de Lanville and Madame Duménil the notion that all feminine griefs are to be assuaged by a glass of water containing that potent calnative, a few drops of orange-flower water! But alas! on the present occasion the nostrum proved ineffectual. Rose sipped and sobbed, and sobbed and sipped; but became neither more composed nor more coherent.

“It is all that abominable Mrs. Warburton Wast,” she faltered. “But first tell me, Nan-nie, who is the Sir Ralph Osbaldiston whom you introduced to us?”

“Barnardiston.”

“Well, Barnardiston. His name don’t

much signify. It is his nature I want to hear about. Why is he your enemy? What did you ever do to him?"

Miss Balfour made no reply, except by a blush that rose to her temples. Even to an old schoolfellow, there was no need to explain that, having fallen in love at first sight with her fortune, the baronet had made such pretensions to her hand as, but for her instant discountenance, would have become an offer of marriage.

"You don't answer me; which confirms me in my notion, that the hatred of a bitter old bachelor like Sir Ralph has its origin in envy and malice."

"But how can I have excited his envy or malice?"

"He is old, ugly, and disagreeable; you are young and loveable," was Rose's cursory summing up. "As you introduced him to us, I naturally supposed him to be your friend," continued she, perceiving that Miss Balfour

waited for further explanations. "So, when he was dining with us the other day, to meet Lord Garstang and the Warburton Wasts, I mentioned to him, as he sat by me at table, how sorry I was that you declined all society, and that I had vainly endeavoured to persuade you to join the party. Upon which Mrs. Warburton Wast, who has a habit of chiming in with everybody's conversation (it may be manners, but *I* don't think so, Nannie!), remarked that—but I hardly like to tell you what she said."

"Pray do," replied Miss Balfour, with a still deeper blush than before. "The criticism of such a woman may prove a wholesome corrective."

"Well then, she observed that I must have baited my trap with something grand indeed, to catch such a very fastidious young lady as Miss Balfour. She said you had brought letters to her from one of her near relations, and that she had called upon you, and invited and

invited you (you never told me *that*, Nannie!). But that you had treated her and her invitations with the utmost contempt!"

"Simply by declining them, on the plea of family mourning."

"So I concluded. But Sir Ralph chose to infer everything that was disparaging, shrugged his shoulders, and curled his lip, like an old ape as he is; and inquired whether we were aware of the real condition in life of the young lady who gave herself such airs? A *parvenue*—a mere *parvenue*—the daughter of a small farmer, little better than a cottar; born and bred in a rude hamlet of North Lancashire. I was about to deny the charge of 'bred,' Nannie, but a frown from George silenced me."

"But, my dear Rose, why so angry with this man?" replied Nannie, calmly. "Excepting the airs with which he charges me, all he advanced is true."

"But there are ways of telling even the truth; and his sneer was so cutting. Besides,

he added—dare I tell you, Nannie?—that your parents were originally servants in a family of his acquaintance.”

“True, again.”

Even Rose was staggered. This was degradation in the scale of society which she could hardly bear to attach to her friend.

“But what of all this?” said Nannie, rallying her courage in proportion as that of her weaker-minded friend became depressed. “If I had ever pretended to be a great lady, or had even intruded among great ladies, the lowliness of my birth might be charged against me. But I have scrupulously refrained from society; and my life of seclusion ought to have secured me from these ungenerous attacks.”

Rose Stodart could offer no argument, either in assent or dissent:—she could only *cry* her sympathy, and persist in her evidence.

“I should not have cared for the spiteful man’s nonsense,” said she, “because I know better than he does what you *are*, Nannie;

which signifies rather more than whom you are! But that Mrs. Warburton Wast put herself into such a state of excitement as caused all her bracelets to jingle, and her plumes to waver; while she declared that she would never forgive her cousin, Mrs. Something or other, for having given letters of introduction to *her*, to a vulgar *parvenue*. But was Sir Ralph certain of the fact?

“ ‘I can simply assure you, madam,’ said he, ‘that I was myself entertained in the parlour of Miss Balfour’s parents, on bread and butter, in the manufacture of which this fastidious young lady had assisted.’

“ ‘If *I* had partaken, sir, of their bread and salt,’ interrupted Lord Garstang, who had been sitting by, all this time, an amused auditor of the whole history, ‘I should have felt that a padlock was on my lips.’

“Sir Ralph did not seem to mind. He was busy helping himself to all the truffles in the dish before him.

“‘But where is this fair manufacturer of bread and butter to be seen?’ added Lord Garstang, addressing me in a half whisper. ‘Middledale adjoins my father’s property; nay, I believe we claim it as our own, when we have nothing else to do. I am a professed protector of native industry; and have many other reasons for wishing to make the acquaintance of so charming a neighbour as Miss Balfour.’

“So you see, dear Nannie,” added Rose, renewing her caresses, “I have a new friend to propose, to fill my place. For (I am ashamed—I am wretched to own it—but I *must*) George has actually interdicted any further communication between us.”

“And yet, you are here!”

“I am here to explain—to apologise—to entreat your forgiveness. I would do so on my knees, Nannie, only that I know you are too high-minded to care for such homage. I am still in hopes that George will come to his

senses ; that he will see the baseness of being controlled by the idle talk of a man of whom he knows nothing, except that his name is in the baronetage."

"It matters little!" said Nannie, well aware that Sir Ralph was as likely to arraign, in the sphere of such people as the Mardykes and Garstangs, the pretensions of the Stodarts themselves, as Manchester cotton-spinners, not of the first class,—as to depreciate herself. "You will not love me the less, Rose, for finding that I am only what you always knew me to be. As I never pretended to the favour of Mrs. Warburton Wast, or the respect of Sir Ralph Barnardiston, it is no mortification to find that I sail in the north of their opinion. But do not, dear Rose, endanger your domestic quiet, or expose me to blame, by persisting in what your husband has forbidden. Do not place *me* under the necessity of interdicting your visits."

"You would not—you *could* not!" cried

Mrs. Stodart, throwing her arms round the neck of Miss Balfour. "I, to whom you have been so kind, and who love you so dearly."

"Best for us both!" sighed Nannie, almost overcome by a struggle for which she had been so little prepared.

"But what am I to do? I have promised Lord Garstang to bring him here. *He* is superior to being influenced by a paltry back-biter, like Sir Ralph Barnardiston! As to the Warburton Wasts, or, as *he* calls them, the Warburton Wasps, I assure you they lick the varnish off his boots."

"I should have thought that such a cynic as I have heard Lord Garstang described, would scorn to *wear* varnished boots."

"Oh, he belongs completely to his class; laughs at it, but abjures none of its customs."

"Then don't bring him here, dear Rose," said Miss Balfour. "If I made an exception to my rule of forming no new acquaintance, it ought not to be in favour of one of whom I

know nothing, except that he is a supercilious young lord—”

“And most agreeable, and the son of a country neighbour,” added Mrs. Stodart.

“My neighbour only in so far that a few acres of mine abut upon many thousands of his. In the scriptural sense, we are no more neighbours than if he lived in the moon. No, dear Rose, since I am to renounce the pleasure of your friendship, you must not deposit a strange bird in my nest.”

In vain did Mrs. Stodart propose a variety of plans for eluding the prohibition of her husband. She readily gave up Lord Garstang. It was immaterial to her whether Nannie consented or not to accept his proffered friendship. But it was a real grief to find, on taking leave of Miss Balfour, that unless her friendship were fully authorised by the head of the house, it must fall into the category of things that had been.

Gnats and mosquitoes are contemptible in-

sects; but any one who has suffered under their venomous sting, will appreciate the irritation poor Nannie had to endure from the attacks of these human persecutors,—equally trivial—equally tormenting.

CHAPTER VIII.

"*Au nom de Dieu, ma chérie, qu'avons nous ?*" exclaimed Madame Duménil, on finding her dear "Nâni," shortly afterwards, in tears. "Anatolie observed to me, yesterday, that you were not in your usual spirits. But I would not hear of it, for I had discerned nothing. You are low, dear child. You have vapours. You live too much alone, which St. Paul declares is not good for man ; still less, for young lady !"

"I am not low, dear Madame Duménil," pleaded Miss Balfour. "But I have many departed friends, and departed happinesses to

regret ; to which I claim the privilege of offering an occasional tribute of memory."

Madame Duménil, though she perceived that Miss Balfour was in one of her less tractable moods, wanted tact to desist.

"I am beginning to be quite of your opinion, ma Nâni," continued she, "that it was time to put an end to the lessons of that prosy Abbate. He had taught you all of ancient Rome you could possibly want to know ; and people fancied it was concerning modern Rome you were receiving instructions. I hinted as much to Mr. Zelters, when I last wrote to my valued friend."

"Mr. Zelters !"

Nannie was vexed to find herself thus exposed to domestic espionage and report. Was she *never* to be independent ? Had every one a right over her, every one the power to represent or misrepresent her proceedings ?— Oh ! how much happier were her quiet days of Middledale obscurity ; when she lived as

she pleased, and had no fears of unkind interpretation on the part of the good old Pairson, or of Hawyer's Cottage.

"It is your own fault, my child," resumed Madame Duménil, on seeing the tears of her charge fall like a thunder-shower. "You should have been reasonable. You should have profited by the eligible opportunities that offered themselves for your introduction into society;—not your *demi-monde* of English travellers, your Varburton Vasps, or other *pire-que-riens*. But the good company into which, small as you may think us, Anatolie and myself could have presented you."

Nannie, inwardly convinced that the word "society" purported in other words a hornet's nest, indignantly shook her head. Bad enough as it was. Had she, the *parvenue*, adventured herself in the struggling throng, what would not have been the amount of her bruises and contusions?

At that moment, Hermann brought in a card.

“The gentleman waited. The gentleman would not take ‘no’ for an answer. Would Mademoiselle be graciously pleased to receive him?”

“The Comte de Lanville!—Léonce!” she exclaimed, sincerely delighted at the prospect of seeing him. It was so long since she had heard a word of Eugénie and Clémence.

Had not her eyes been, at that moment, swollen with weeping, “Mademoiselle” would have been, doubtless, struck by the prodigious improvement effected by matrimony in the appearance of her quondam suitor. So sobered down—so gentlemanly in his air and deportment! He advanced towards her with an extended hand, cordial as ever, but subdued and reasonable.

“By mere accident, I heard yesterday that you were in Rome,” said he. “Admit that I have lost no time in profiting by the information! But how well you are looking,—how grown, — how developed!” cried he,

with the frankness of a near relative, rather than of an acquaintance. "Clémence will be enchanted with the news you have enabled me to afford her of your welfare."

"And Eugénie?"

"Ah!—that dear Eugénie! The kindest thing we can do for *her* is to leave her undisturbed by tidings of the world she has renounced."

Miss Balfour could hardly refrain from alluding to the compulsory nature of the renunciation. But the Count was so thoroughly in good humour with himself and her, that it would have been a shame to ruffle his smoothness.

"That animal of a Sir Ralph Barnardiston!" said he. "Do you see much of him?"

"So little, that I am privileged to call it nothing."

"*Tant mieux!* 'Tis a *miserable* creature—a *dangerous* creature! But you, *ma chère demoiselle*, why are you not married? I was

informed, ages ago, that you were *fiancée* to a cousin. Young ladies are commonly *fiancées* to a cousin. I hope you are not going to throw over yours. With your advantages, a woman has no business to be single."

Nannie, though thoroughly out of spirits on his entrance into the room, could not help being amused at the coolness with which he rushed *in medias res*; attacking subjects which relatives and friends are apt to respect.

Madame Duménil, who had fallen back upon her tambouring frame in a corner of the room, as became her vocation, was charmed at the vivacity of the only *homme comme il faut* she had seen in that house since her instalment.

"Clémence will be wanting circumstantial news of you," continued the Count; "and what am I to tell her?—That I find you nearly where we left you,—except that you are grown twenty times prettier, and fifty times more sedate? I was not half aware what a

handsome wife I should secure when I made you that mad offer of my hand, which you wisely rejected."

Nannie could no longer refrain from a laugh : this outspoken Léonce was so different from the persons with whom she had been recently in contact.

"You don't ask me," he continued, "why I am here?—a fact which is even to myself a pleasant surprise. For one's feet once imprisoned in Belgian clay, it is usually for life."

"And you have now escaped?"

"Thanks to a diplomatic mission relative to the Concordat, with which my brother-in-law, the Prince de Courtrai, is entrusted, I am here, as a secretary of legation. I myself am so much amazed at my own importance, that I scarcely dare sign the smallest *billet-doux*, lest my incapacity should compromise my *chef*. But now, tell me, as I have rendered a full account of myself, what are *you* doing in Rome?"

“Enjoying a milder climate than that of Lancashire ; and the sight of objects which thousands, besides myself, hasten year after year to admire.”

“Yes, yes ! *That* is all stereotyped. But at your age, neither climate nor antiquities afford real attraction. Yet if that old impostor, Sir Ralph, is to be believed, you live the life of an anchorite.”

“I am wearing mourning for my father,” said Nannie ; an announcement which sufficed to close the lips of the volatile Léonce. For, in foreign countries, the fifth commandment maintains its pristine authority.

“At all events,” continued Léonce, “you must make an exception in favour of me and my wife. *I* am an old friend ; and for the sake of my sisters, you must learn to love Madame de Lanville. You are already known to her by name. To-morrow, you must become known to her in person. Pray allow me to bring her to visit you ?”

It was impossible not to feel gratified by so much courtesy and kindness. Poor Nannie ran some risk of believing that the first crusade furnished more satisfactory specimens of human nature, than Manchester or May Fair.

“And did you really, my dear child, refuse to become the wife of that charming young man, the representative of one of the first houses in Europe?” exclaimed Madame Dumenil, when, after formal salutations to both ladies, Léonce at length quitted the room.

“Since you heard him assert it, you are privileged to believe it,” replied Nannie, with a smile. “But I am not apt to boast of conquests or refusals.”

“And in consequence of your reserve on such subjects, I have hitherto believed that *Zelters fils*,—*ce gros lourdaud de Wilhem*,—was your only admirer! What an error! But this *aimable* Monsieur de Lanville, what, in the name of all that is marvellous, made you reject him?”

“ I did not like him.”

“ And on what possible account?—Good-looking—well-bred—high-born—agreeable—”

“ Since our first acquaintance, he is greatly improved. Vexations brought upon him by his own folly, appear to have steadied his character ; and the society of a pleasing wife has certainly improved his manners.”

“ At least, then, *chère Náni*, you will not decline the visit of Madame la Comtesse ? It would be unheard of. You would perhaps be suspected of pique at his having so readily replaced you in his heart. No, no, my child ! You owe it to yourself to receive her. And, consider, what a relief, what a happiness to *me*, to hear my own language spoken once more, and by persons so recommendable !”

A few days before, and even these entreaties had been unavailing to reverse Miss Balfour's previous determination. But the revelations of Rose were still rankling in her mind. The gratuitous malice of the W. W.s and Sir

Ralph had wounded her more deeply than she cared to own. She yearned after kindness as a restorative!

Little leisure was allowed her to debate the question. The following morning, Monsieur de Lanville introduced his wife with as little ceremony as he had introduced himself; and half an hour's friendly intercourse established terms of familiarity between them.

Apprised by Léonce of the peculiarities of Miss Balfour's station in life, the young Countess redoubled the courtesies of a naturally gracious disposition, in order to place her at ease. Like most people who visit Rome for the first time, she had been reading up "Corinne;" and took it into her somewhat romantic little head, that the first young English girl with whom she had ever conversed, must be the very type of Lucille Edgermond.

"Yes. Your name ought really to be Lucille," cried she, in the spirit of the French gentleman who endeavoured to persuade Sterne

that he was really Yorick.—“ I have so often made Léonce recount to me his adventures in your dear England, and how he made your acquaintance at a dairy-house, like what one reads of in the *divine Clarisse*!—*Du reste*, I have set my heart on visiting England some day or other, and seeing all the places and people he has so often described to me.”

Nannie could not help surmising that, had the Count been perfectly candid respecting his English tour, she would be less anxious to renew its temptations. But she was wrong. Eglantine knew all. The cause of the sale of the Hawkshill property, and of Eugène de Lanville's taking the veil, had been fully explained to her. But she knew also that the severe lessons of that disastrous epoch in the life of her husband, had been effectual. From the period of his happy marriage, Léonce had neither touched a card, nor made a bet.

Even before the visit was concluded, indeed, Miss Balfour had cause to revoke her opinion.

Sir Ralph Barnardiston was spoken of, both by husband and wife, in terms that left no doubt of Madame de Lanville's perfect knowledge of the evil influence he had formerly exercised over her husband.

"*Cet homme qui ne m'a pas précisément volé, mais qui m'a laissé voler,*" said the Count;—"who stood by smiling, while rogues had their hands in my pocket,—had the audacity, yesterday, my dear Miss Balfour, to *tutoyer* me in presence of half-a-dozen of his countrymen! But I received his advances with a degree of coldness that must have chilled him to the marrow; and he is at this moment suffering, I flatter myself, from a severe attack of rheumatism. And by the way," added the Count, "it was from one of those half-dozen countrymen, my friend, Lord Garstang, that I heard of your being in Rome."

"Lord Garstang, the son of Lord Mardyke? How can he have even heard my name?—I never saw him in my life."

“That is what he complains of.—Apropos to an extraordinary card of invitation, my wife and I received yesterday from an English lady, of which more hereafter, he told me that they and Sir Ralph were the most troublesome, pushing, officious people in the world. But that I must not act on *his* intelligence, inasmuch as he felt very bitterly towards them, for having been the means of closing against him the door of my friend Miss Balfour.—I wondered quite as much at his being aware of our friendship, as you at his knowing your name; till he reminded me that his father had bought Hawkshill of the Van der Heldes, and that his residence lay within a drive of Middledale;—grounds enough, you see, for that prating prig, Sir Ralph, to have made us the *dramatis personæ* of one of his romances.”

“He is a most amusing person, however, your Lord Garstang,” broke in the Countess, around whom, as doing the honours of her

bachelor-brother's embassy, the English in Rome were already crowding. "But tell me, what is the meaning of these?" she continued, taking from her muff a highly-glazed visiting card, bearing the name of "Mr. and Mrs. Warburton Wast," "the Misses Warburton Wast," accompanied by another card, large enough for a boundary placard, requesting "the honour of the Count and Countess de Lanville's,—no—Monsieur le Compté and Madame la Comptesse de Lanville's company to dinner, four weeks after date."

"We never heard before of these hospitable personages," said Léonce, shrugging his shoulders. "Is it the custom of good society, in England, to seize people by the ear on the highway, in this unceremonious manner?"

"You must not ask *me* what is done in good society in England," replied Nannie, with a smile. "I am still what you used to call me,—a *petite paysanne*!—But I should imagine it was the custom of *no* country, and *no* society."

“ Garstang assures us that these people fire off invitations at every new comer, and often wing their birds. Some are surprised into accepting ; some accept from curiosity. He strongly advised us to go. — This ridiculous family, he says, will be sure to afford us a laugh.”

“ Remember my brother’s golden rule,” remonstrated Eglantine, — “ never to accept invitations from those whom you would not invite in return. — Besides, it is shameful to accept people’s hospitality only to laugh at them.”

“ *That*, I’m afraid, is one of Garstang’s bad habits. All he cares for is to divert himself, — no matter at whose expense. — However, we will immediately dispatch an excuse to the gang which stops you on the highway, and presents an invitation to your heart instead of a pistol. — After saying which,” he continued, turning to Nannie, “ how can I hope that you will accept ours ? — As you plead mourning,

we will not ask you to join one of our public days.—The Prince has two official dinners a week at the Palazzo Rinuccini. On other occasions, my wife and I usually dine alone in our own suite of apartments there. In common charity to Eglantine, you must come sometimes, and save us from so perilous a *tête-à-tête*.—Husband and wife, you know, are *one* ; and I am not fond of solitude.”

Opposition to the proposal so frankly made, was impossible ; more especially when Madame de Lanville expressed her wish to exhibit to so dear a friend of her sisters-in-law, her little daughter, her “ pretty little Eugénie,”—a name which acted like a talisman on the heart of Nannie.—A day, therefore, was fixed,—the one which Madame Duménil was in the habit of spending weekly with her dear Anatolie ; for even unversed as she was in worldly usages, Miss Balfour fully understood that the widow of a Colonel de l’Empire and hanger-on of the Bonapartean dynasty, could not be an acceptable

guest to the representative of any reigning sovereign.

Madame de Lanville was to come and fetch her at an early hour.

“My *marmot* goes to sleep after dinner, *charmante Lucille*,” said she, taking Nannie graciously by the hand at parting; “and I am afraid we must consult her little majesty’s gracious pleasure as well as our own, in timing your visit.”

CHAPTER IX.

MISS BALFOUR was almost inclined to recede from her engagement when she saw the equipage of the Prince de Courtrai, remarkable for the tremendous plume of its stalwart *Chasseur* dispatched for her by Madame de Lanville. Greatly would she have preferred the shabby *remise* she was in the habit of using. But a kind little note from the Countess explained, that the indisposition of her little girl rendered it impossible to leave her; and that "she trusted to her charming Lucille to come and assist her in the task of nursing a sick and spoiled child."

Such an appeal, there was no resisting. Unluckily, it was a bright May day, the first after a series of unfavourable weather; and all Rome was astir. Never had poor Nannie seen the streets so thronged as now that, on her way to the Palazzo Rinuccini, she would fain have shrunk by, unnoticed.

This, however, was not to be. The Ambassador Extraordinary from the Netherlands and his family, were the lions of the hour. In the first place, his Excellency was a bachelor, and, consequently, a mark for speculation. In the next, the sister who did the honours of his house, was young, lovely, and passionately fond of dancing; and had already announced weekly *soirées dansantes* for the whole time of their stay. But above all, the Prince de Courtrai was reported to have brought with him what signified far more than his diplomatic tactics or private connections, a *bonnet blanc* who was a *cordon bleu*.—a cook of European reputation!

All classes of society were consequently prepared to receive him with becoming respect ; and the rabid English clique, mad after *fêtes* and titles, had already laid siege to his door. The Warburton Wasts were undergoing spasmodic efforts to attract his Excellency's attention ; and Sir Ralph Barnardiston had written his name in his Excellency's book, till it resembled those modern advertisements which pretend to arrest the eye of the public by "damnable iteration."

When, therefore, his equipage was descried at a distance by an equestrian group, consisting of the Misses W. W., escorted by Sir Ralph, who found his account in enlisting as their cavalier,—by the George Stodarts in their mail phaeton,—and the family coach of the Begum W. W.—who were parading the Corso, each and all settled their chins in their collars, and called up a look, to be in readiness for a passing salutation to Madame la Comtesse de Lanville.

"Impossible,—almost impossible !" was the

universal exclamation, as the ambassador's carriage rolled on, covering them with dust ; and they found their respectful bow to the Comtesse de Lanville, *née* Princesse de Courtrai, returned by the grave-faced and diffident Nannie Bal-four. "That upstart, that *parvenue*, still wearing crape and bombazine for her old farmer-father, in the carriage of an ambassador!—Where would the pretensions, where would the success of some people end?—What could it all mean?"

Sir Ralph, the universal dragoman, was, of course, good at a solution. There were few mysteries he did not pretend to explain, from those of St. Peter's chair down to those of a *chaise-à-porteurs*. "The sister of the Count de Lanville," he informed them, "had formerly resided in the vicinity of the Lancashire Dalesman's daughter, and taken her up as a plaything. The Count himself had been slightly smitten with the charms of Nannie—or of her bread and butter ; and, apparently, *though*

honourably married, his predilections remained unchanged."

A villanous hint, considering the promptitude of his companions in accrediting and circulating scandal. Yes! this prim young lady, who would not condescend to dine or gossip with them, on pretence of deep mourning and family affliction, was actually making a public parade of her improper intimacy with the married Secretary of Legation. Such was their version of the story.

George Stodart, however, while in his phaeton

Aloft in solemn state
The Godlike hero sat,

turned a deaf ear to the insinuation ; and was sincere in his lamentations that he should have forced his wife to renounce the acquaintance of one who appeared to be the bosom friend of "the greatest swells in Rome."

"If there was a person he wanted to know," was his candid confession to poor Rose,

agreeably fluttered by the unexpected sight of her dear Nannie, "it was that Count de Lanville, the intimate friend of Lord Garstang; the pluckiest rider, for a foreigner, he had ever beheld, and whom he had seen bow down the familiarity of Sir Ralph Barnardiston, as if the self-sufficient baronet were a shoeblack. You ought to have told me, Rose," added he, fretfully, "that though your friend was nobody in herself, she had formed intimacies, in favour of which one might have been disposed to put up with her."

Little conscious of the revulsion of feeling she had created, the whole heart of Nannie was speedily engrossed by the anxieties of Madame de Lanville; exaggerated, as is usually the case with the mother of an only child. Their morning was passed beside the *berçeaunette*, in palliating the peevishness of little Eugénie, a somewhat more wilful and selfish being than her namesake. As they were alone, an evening toilet was not to be thought

of; and the two ladies emerged from the Countess's dressing-room only when dinner was announced.

Léonce instantly led Miss Balfour to the dim old frescoed dining-room; and it was not till seated at table, that Nannie perceived they were four at table. The Count muttered some allusion to having provided against the chance of dining alone, in case his wife should be detained by the little invalid; and, in the somewhat slovenly-looking young Englishman opposite to her, Nannie recognised one whom she had more than once noticed among the loungers of the Corso, and set down as a servant or shopkeeper. He appeared, however, to be on the best of terms with his entertainers.

"You passed us this morning like a vision, and 'trailing clouds of glory,' Miss Balfour," said he, abruptly addressing her. — "But you hardly imagine to what a series of novels and romances your rapid transit gave rise. English

Rome is in commotion. English Rome will, in the course of a day or two, leave its most obsequious cards at your door. You are accused, among other things, of being privately married to His Excellency the Prince de Courtrai, that is, *que vous l'êtes, le fûtes, ou le devez être*. And, under such circumstances, how are you to escape being fastened on by the Warburton Wasps?"

Startled by the stranger's unaccountable familiarity, Miss Balfour, having made a slight reply, addressed Madame de Lauville in French, with the view of making the conversation general. But her new acquaintance had not half finished his attack, and chose to be heard.

"What have you done to that old Sir Ralph," said he, "that he should be so much your enemy?—Is it from the instinctive spite of age and ugliness towards youth and beauty?—Or have you, in some unguarded moment, refused to become Lady Barnardiston?"

"To that fact *I* can bear witness," inter-

rupted Léonce, much amused by Miss Balfour's confusion.

"I am interested in understanding the real state of the case," continued his guest, "because if he should persist in his malevolence, I, as Miss Balfour's fellow-countryman — nay, fellow-*countymen*—am bound to buckle on my armour in her defence."

"I trust I have no pressing occasion for a champion," said Nannie, more and more surprised.

"Greater far than you wot of!" retorted the stranger—in whom Miss Balfour had no longer any difficulty in recognising Lord Garstang, though it was difficult, to her inexperienced eye, to connect so shabby-looking an individual with the grand domain of Mardyke. "Besides," continued he, "I have promised my friend Hildyard to keep watch and ward over you, if you should become the victim of Papal or any other aggression, during my stay in Rome."

More surprises! — Cousin Ely metamorphosed into the fidus Achates of the young heir of Mardyke Castle and Hawkshill! —

“Au bout du compte, what strange people you English are!” exclaimed Léonce. “John Bull is usually typified as a fat, jovial, good-humoured fellow, with one hand in his pocket full of gold, and the other outstretched to shake hands with all mankind. But that must be the John Bull who stays at home in his chimney-corner. For the English one meets on the highways of Europe, are always wrangling out of petty payments, or squabbling among themselves.”

“Too true!” was the young lord’s rejoinder. “I believe the instinct of antagonism to be the strongest which an Englishman brings into the world. Our bump of pitchit-inativeness is prodigious. But may not this be a preponderating element of our national greatness? Without it, Magna Charta would never have been signed. Without it, we

should have had no limited monarchy—no Reformation—no Revolution—no nothing ;—never have circumnavigated the globe, to plant the British flag wherever anything would grow, or prosecuted wars of extermination against the natives,—brown, black, or cream-coloured,—of every country which did not choose to be pitched into without remonstrance.”

“And the backbiting?—Is *that* a national or original sin?” inquired Madame de Lanville, entering gaily into his irony.

“Still the result of antagonism ;—the revolt of individuals against the great confederacy of society. The excluded taking aim at the exclusive. Idle people, too, have recourse to a pinch of scandal, nowadays, to keep themselves awake, as our ancestors to a pinch of snuff. We left off snuff-taking as a dirty habit. The next generation may, perhaps, leave off scandal-mongering, for the same reason.”

“But pray tell me, *mon cher* Garstang,” said Léonce, “the name of a pretty daughter of the John Bull we are abusing, to whom I saw you talking this morning in the Piazza di Spagna: a fair, laughing creature, with teeth like pearls, and a snob of a husband?”

“The snob of a husband proclaims himself everywhere my friend;—and I am therefore prepared to say my worst of him! Not of the wife, who is as amiable and nearly as foolish as she looks. Unless those Warburton Wasp people should inoculate her with their vulgar finery and ridiculous pretensions, she will return to her cotton-factory the same kindly unsophisticated being she set out.”

“Rose!” exclaimed Nannie—“Mrs. George Stodart!” added she, remembering that she must no longer claim her as a friend.

“Ay, Rose!” replied Lord Garstang, “from whom I have learned almost as much concerning Miss Balfour, as from E. H. I am fully aware that if Mrs. Stodart understands

little French and no Italian, it is the fault of a certain much-loved schoolfellow, named Nannie, who assisted her in her exercises, and spared her the pains and penalties of duncehood."

"Are they people one could know?" inquired Léonce, aware that the Stodarts had already bespoken an introduction to the Prince de Courtrai.

"Certainly, — unquestionably ; — perfectly harmless, — only underbred, ignorant, and vain ;—belonging, however, to one of our most influential classes, though still at the foot of the ladder. If Stodart were content to stand in his father's shoes (instead of his own tight boots), and stick to his business instead of affecting habits which squander a fortune instead of making one, he might progress in time into one of our merchant princes, and become a pillar of strength to his order."

"HIS ORDER?" inquired Léonce, aghast.

"Which is becoming the nursery of ours," persisted the young lord. "While *we* are

wasting our energies in battues and fox-hunts these Manchester people are qualifying themselves for Chancellors of the Exchequer and Secretaries of State. See where less than a century of successful trade has placed the Barings — Labouchères — Jones-Loyds;—their wits brightened by perpetual use, and their fortunes by their wits.”

“Surely, my dear Garstang,” rejoined the Comte de Lanville, “since we parted at Baden, three years ago, you have become enormously liberalized?”

“Time I should, my dear friend, if I want to keep my head on my shoulders, and my coronet on my head!” rejoined Lord Garstang. “The only means of preserving the Old world from revolution, is by taking a leaf or two from the book of the New. Not whole chapters. But modified liberalisation on the part of the higher classes will place them on a far pleasanter and more Christianlike level with the lower, than by elevating the mob

upon stilts, till they become giddy and useless."

Léonce de Lanville sent the mob forthwith "*à tous les diables*," with as little ceremony as the mob would probably have returned the compliment.

"I saunter about the world with my hands in my pockets, as becomes an elder son in the lifetime of a father who loves his foxhounds better than his offspring," added Lord Garstang; "bearing, in my own despite, the *volto sciolto, pensieri stretti*; because my noble sire is afraid of putting me into parliament, to discredit, by my radicalism, the name of my ancestors. But if condemned to be mute, I am neither blind nor deaf. I can hear the growl of the rising tempest, and discern the small black cloud rising out of the sea; and, trust me, it behoves us all to look to our boat and its crew."

"I am not afraid!" cried Léonce, after a glass of dry champagne, of a quality to drown

a host of cares and apprehensions. "Little Belgium, God bless her! is the most self-contained kingdom in Europe."

"A boast which proves how little you know of little Belgium!" retorted Garstang. "*Mon cher*, it is, of all others, a land of combustibles — *houille* below, Arteveldes above. Once apply the match, and conflagration is inevitable."

"I know not what a dexterous incendiary like one Lord Garstang might effect," said Léonce, laughing.

"Tu, tu, tu! What interest could I possibly have in seeing 'the kiln in a low?' No!—I merely listened and looked, on my road along the Meuse from Brussels to Spa, and readily discovered that the fusion between Belgium and Holland was on the eve of a rupture. Don't start!—Don't flare up! I perceived nearly as much last summer, on my father's estates; where he is about as popular as William Rufus in the New Forest. I, who

care only for game when roasted, not on the wing, was in the way of hearing murmurs and menaces that will never reach his lordship's ear till a reformed parliament is sitting, or, perhaps, Mardyke Castle in ashes !”

Miss Balfour almost trembled at these bold assertions. She had heard Lord Garstang described as one who, under an exterior of much levity, and some eccentricity, concealed grave views and solid information. Besides, all he advanced was in perfect unison with the predictions of the Zelters and Brent families, previous to her quitting England. Was there, indeed, danger of an European outbreak? Were they standing on a specious crust of ashes, on the verge of a crater, as Madame Duménil and Anatolie were perpetually assuring each other; prophesying of better times for themselves, to follow the coming eruption.

She resolved to apply, without delay, to

“her affectionate friend, H. Brent,” for a solution of her anxieties. For though Miss Balfour had predetermined that, in the event of popular commotion, she would seek shelter in some religious house, she was not ignorant that in more than one crisis in the history of nations, even the walls of convents and monasteries have proved no safeguard.

“For the sake of goodness, my dear Garstang,” cried the Count, the moment the servants had left the room, “beware of indulging, in Rome, in the license of speech we used to enjoy in our Paris club, or which you assert in your London coteries : where, I’m told, it is now the fashion to play at liberalism, as formerly, at *écarté*. The thrones of both Guelphs and Bourbons are, perhaps, tottering. But so long as they stand, it is not for the aristocracy to throw stones at them. Above all, remember that in this Eternal City, which, in the general smash, would, perhaps, be the first to adopt a popular government, there

exists, at present, a stringent police; which might dispose of you, bodily, as readily as you do, by word of the mouth, of the destinies of king and kaiser."

"Don't you perceive that I am aiming at the distinction of political martyrdom?" replied the young lord, with one of his untranslatable smiles: "the only road to fame, or, if you will, to notoriety, that has not been thoroughly used up. In England, it is becoming difficult to wake some morning, like Byron, and find oneself famous. I am not equal," added he, bowing courteously to Miss Balfour, "to the great labours, or worthy of the sterling honours, of an E. H. But a month or two in an Austrian or Papal dungeon, would send me back to London as the lion of the season. Who knows? I might get into Parliament for Westminster, or marry an heiress!"

"At all events," remonstrated the Count, vexed that any other person's egotism should

out-talk his own,—“don’t drive every vestige of colour from the cheek of Miss Balfour, or afflict my poor wife with a fit of the yawns, as you are doing now. In the Palazzo Rinuccini we keep politics under lock and key, in our *Chancellerie*. Let us rather talk about the ball we shall enjoy to-morrow night at the Spanish embassy, which, it seems, is to be a splendid affair.”

“I thought so ; because old Barnardiston, who has vainly endeavoured to procure invitations for his English *clique*, informed me to day that it would be a failure !” observed Lord Garstang. “Generally speaking, I prefer to any other, the *fêtes* of the Spanish diplomacy, all over the world. They are always cut on a pattern of their own. Other ambassadors are apt to be under the influence of some reigning Sultana—a handsome Mistress of the Robes, or *Dame d’honneur*. Or her Excellency, his wife, is a patroness of Almack’s, or belongs to the *petit château*, by

which their visiting book is *visé*. Whereas the Blue Blood Grandees regulate *theirs* by an Almanach de Saxe-Gotha, or Debrett's Peerage, fifty years' old, and have it supervised by their Confessor. No presumptuous man of letters, or aspiring artist, exhibits his dusty clogs between the wind and *their* nobility; and it would be a safe bet that every second guest in the house of a grandee of the first class, signs with his mark."

The Comte de Lanville, perceiving that, even in discussing such matters as balls and galas, Lord Garstang assumed the brief of leading counsel, was thankful when coffee made its appearance, and they adjoined to the saloon.

To the great dismay of poor Nannie, she now found that little Eugénie being so fast asleep as to relieve Madame de Lanville of all anxiety, her doors were, according to custom, open to all comers. The Prince de Courtrai

himself made a short appearance in his sister's circle ;—a heavy, dignified man, exhibiting just the length, breadth, and thickness, desirable in an Ambassador-extraordinary, who has nothing to negotiate that cannot be better done by his private secretary.

While waiting for her carriage, which had not been ordered till ten o'clock, Miss Balfour, in her simple morning dress, would have felt uncomfortable, and out of place, but that Lord Garstang took possession of a seat before her, and left her not a moment's opportunity to observe, or be observed.

" You show no interest, Miss Balfour," said he, " concerning my intimacy with your cousin ? I was in hopes that, the moment I mentioned his name, you would have opened your arms, or at least your heart, to me. Instead of which, you do not even open your lips !"

It could not but suggest itself to Nannie

that his lordship left to other people little opportunity for talking.

“ Well, since you won’t ask me,” he resumed, “ I will tell you what brought us together, or rather *who* brought us together :— namely, that excellent fellow, William Barnett, who coached me at Oxford for my degree, and afterwards undertook the neglected education of your cousin. I suspect he infused into Hildyard all the knowledge which he had been vainly endeavouring to hammer into my dense brain. My father having taken it into *his* that I must stand for an honour, the hard labour which the pretension cost poor Barnett, and his deep mortification at my failure, injured his health. At Clifton, where he was ordered to spend the following winter, he fell in with Hildyard.”

“ My cousin’s letters have often mentioned Mr. Barnett. But rather as a friend than a tutor.”

“ In Hildyard’s case, as in mine, he ma-

naged to unite both capacities. I never take an important step without consulting Barnett. The first time I visited him at Clifton for some such purpose, I confess to you I thought it behoved him to prepare my unfortunate successor for a better world, so doubtful appeared his chance of survival in *this*. It was then my ex-tutor informed me that Hildyard was unusually ill and oppressed ; a disappointment of the affections having all but cost him his life."

"My cousin's health was always delicate and infirm," interposed Nannie, sorrowfully.

"Granted ;—or he would have been less easily preyed upon by what men of sense and stamina throw off like the measles ! However, when, in process of time and talk, he became *my* friend as well as Barnett's, and explained to me how this love of his had grown and strengthened with him till it was as a part of his very nature, I began to pity him ; and only wished that the cousin Nannie had never

been born, who had proved the means of blighting so valuable an existence."

An involuntary feeling of mortification clouded the brow of Miss Balfour, that her cousin should have talked of her, and of his passion, to a comparative stranger ; a stranger, too, of the sarcastic and sceptical nature of Lord Garstang. *She* would sooner have died than open her heart to such a man ! She would sooner have died than pronounce, even to her cousin, the cherished name of Maurice !

But alas ! it was this very reserve which served to feed and cherish the monster preying on her mind. Had she possessed a true and rational friend to whom to confide the trust she had accepted, and the attachment by which she fancied herself fettered, she would have been taught to regard it as a girlish fantasy. The letter left in her charge would have been long ago confided to the legal agents of Mrs. Varnham. She would have been told that Maurice was no more ;

or that, if living, the ties between them were at an end. It would have been proved to her that it was not difference of religion, alone, or personal jealousy, but discrepancy of character, which had alienated his affections.

Had she even belonged to the church against which her better reason rebelled, confession would have placed her under the guidance of a spiritual director. But to whom, isolated as she was, could she turn for counsel? To the hard-spoken and practical H. Brent? To the frivolous Madame Duménil, who judged all things by the rule of the *comme il faut*? To the Lanvilles, light-headed and light-hearted, too self-engrossed to enter into her cares? To cousin Ely, to whom it was impossible to be an impartial adviser? Or to this jactant young lord, who, while he appeared cognisant of her own and every body's affairs, seemed to find pleasure in promoting universal confusion? Even the few letters she had received from David

Hurdis, since her departure from England proved that fourscore years had done their work upon the old man, and that his intellect was declining.

No! she had *no* friends. She had only those two miniatures;—the fair-haired child, the dark-browed youth,—which had been deposited for her by Mrs. Varnham in the fatal casket which still served to unite her fate with that of Maurice. These she consulted. These were her oracles,—these her household treasures,—these the symbols of a worship all but idolatrous!

Yet what living woman has not, at one moment or other of her life, cherished an infatuation of the same engrossing nature?—

CHAPTER X.

LORD GARSTANG, a professed cynic, was little in the habit of admitting, even to himself, that he was surprised by any amount of excellence. *Nil admirari* was his device. He had troubled his head more about Nannie Balfour than he was apt to do concerning any individual of the weaker sex. But, shrewd enough to perceive that neither his looks nor his manners recommended him to her favour, he scorned to be more indebted to advantages of worldly position than to personal endowments. But because he knew her to be an object of adoration to a man of exalted mind ; because he saw her valued by persons

of the highest social tact ; and above all, because he heard her loaded with abuse by certain others, who were objects of his especial detestation, he could not at once renounce her acquaintance.

He sat down to dinner with her at the Palazzo Rinuccini, predetermined to investigate her qualities and abilities, and astonish her with his own brilliancy and originality.—But on retiring at night from the house, he was forced to admit that he had signally failed.—He seemed to know less of her thoughts and feelings now, than after one of the vivid eulogies of E. H. ; while, on the other hand, her indifference to his sallies and paradoxes had been painfully manifest.

But if in these respects disappointed, her beauty had taken him by surprise. On that, his friend E. H. had never insisted. Yet had he rarely seen, in combination, such delicacy of features and complexion, or so sweet an expression of countenance. The most beautiful

mouth and softest brown eyes in the world, were a dowry in themselves. But to these was added a form, which the fastidious Romans admitted to be of more than classic symmetry.

With the usual prejudices of his caste, he had anticipated in the descendant of Midlothian farmers and Guelderland boors, a fine handsome girl, unrefined and over-developed. But the hands and feet of Nannie Balfour would have done honour to any Howard or Percy intermarried with his race.—An accidental glimpse of his own person in the glass, as he made these reflections, convinced him that, as far as extrinsic high-breeding was concerned, the Middledale farm had far the better of Mardyke Castle.

Having made this humiliating confession, he dismissed the subject peremptorily from his thoughts, and went his way, as usual, to his club, his ride, his visits. But somehow or other, the image of that beautiful and graceful girl was constantly recurring.—In satisfying

his curiosity respecting Hildyard's flame, he had kindled another in his own bosom that night not to be easily extinguished.—He, usually so self-governed, so superior to vulgar impulses, felt that his reason was at fault.

“I must keep out of the way of that girl while I am safe,” was his repeated cogitation.—“Love and matrimony are superfluities which I reserve for my grey hairs,—a recreation for my old age.—At present the stir of the world suffices me. Still, for better surety, I will keep out of the way of those antelope's eyes!”

In order to do this the more effectually, he was never out of the Palazzo Rinuccini. He knew that even if Nannie desired to avoid him, the coaxing but peremptory little Countess would not dispense with her company. But she had, in fact, no desire of the kind. His abrupt statement of being in her cousin's confidence, and, as she inferred, of knowing her heart and hand to be engaged,

placed her at ease in his company. Nay, there appeared such thorough discrepancy between the son of the destroyer of Hawkshill and the child of Madge Verhout, that she would as soon have dreamed of one of the Tritons of the Piazza Navona descending from its fountain, to do her homage.

She was consequently frank and cordial with him, as with the friend of her friends; and only the more charming from her utter want of consciousness. Their mutual interest, fervent on one side—feigned on the other—in the sickness and slow recovery of little Eugénie, brought them often together, and Miss Balfour already thought better of Lord Garstang, from his sympathy in the anxiety of the anxious parents. She began sincerely to regret that his acute but flighty intellect should be so little under the governance of principle, and that the word duty had no place in his vocabulary, except as matter for a *bon-mot*.

“He is charming, your Lord Garstang, *ma*

chère enfant," said Madame Duménil, one morning, after they had returned home from enjoying a breezy walk, on the Pincian hill.

"He has, as you know, a key to Princess Gabrielli's box, at every theatre; and like all men of intellect and spirit who visit Rome, is her frequent guest. But to whom do you suppose, he devotes himself, in that brilliant circle? To our poor dear Anatolie! Figure to yourself, *ma Nâni*, that instead of indulging in foolish flirtations, after the manner of his age, he will sit by her evening after evening, enquiring with the greatest interest about the court of the Reine Hortense, and the illustrious men with whom it brought her acquainted."

"A very natural curiosity," replied Miss Balfour.

"But still more concerning the life we lead here in the Strada della Longara. Very natural, too, you will say. For, thanks to your infatuation for a nun-like solitude, *who* knows,

and *who* can relate, except poor Anatolie, the habits of our house?"

"Lord Garstang is intimately acquainted with one of my nearest relatives," said Nannie, by way of apology for his inquisitiveness.

"Yes, — probably — perhaps. But it is to gratify *himself* he listens to her little stories of all your kindness to us both, all you do for the poor, all your industry and zeal for your own improvement. Anatolie declares that his lordship is as passionately in love as any Paladin of old."

"Mademoiselle St. Martin is a little romantic;—you have often admitted it, *chère Madame*. Lord Garstang is a man incapable of falling in love with any one; least of all with a low-born person like myself: or, as Sir Ralph calls me, a mere *parvenue*."

"But you are young—rich—beautiful—"

"A great deal more is required in England by a family like Lord Mardyke's," replied

Nannie, not thinking it worth while to disclaim her exaggerated compliments.

“Nay, nay!—In Germany, I admit, such prejudices still prevail; but in England, surely not! Have not many of your peers married actresses, and the daughters of actors, who have been subsequently received at court?”

“So it is said. I know nothing of peers or courts.”

“The very thing, Lord Garstang observes, which renders you so charming,—so unconventional,—so free from vulgar errors and prejudices.”

“He may say so; but he does not think it. His own liberalism is on *his* part a vulgar error, and only skin-deep. As to the marriages to which you just now alluded, I suspect that an actress of eminence would be more acceptable to a man such as I have heard Lord Mardyke described, than an insignificant person like myself, destitute of all *éclat*, and descended from domestic servants.”

“But why dwell on your descent? Who knows or cares anything about it? Be of your century, my child. Half of the greatest names of the time are self-created. Half of the great men of France are, to borrow the expression of one of them, their own ancestors.”

“The social position of England and France can scarcely be compared,” replied Nannie. “France, to the best of her power, destroyed her nobility at the first revolution, and replaced it with the worthiest materials she could find. But the remnant of the *ancienne noblesse*, I am told, still holds aloof from the new.”

“Pardon me! In every case where the new has acquired money as well as rank, the old sues for its alliance! On the other hand, the *ancienne noblesse* of France, Austria, Spain, declare that England cannot produce four families qualified to enter into a noble Chapter, or wear the Golden Fleece.—Foolish people! Admire what a race they have produced by *these* intermarriages!—Look at the grandees of Spain!”—

"I would rather look at Monsieur and Madame de Lanville," replied Nannie, with a smile; "each of whom belongs to a *famille chapitrée*, and is, notwithstanding, as good a specimen as can well be seen of personal beauty."

"Ah, my dear little Nâni!—*that* is precisely what you should not perceive;—at least, what you should not *seem* to see. Monsieur le Comte, a married man, can never be anything to *you*. You must not cite *him* as handsome."

"Not when his wife is perpetually pointing out his good looks to my admiration?"

"His wife!—it is different. But it is not the first time I have had occasion to warn you against frequenting too much the society of the Palazzo Rinuccini."

It was neither the first time nor the fiftieth; and Miss Balfour had been half tempted to attribute these warnings, on the part of her duenna, perhaps ungenerously, to pique against

a circle from which she was necessarily excluded.

“It is an ill-natured world,” resumed Madame Duménil;—“especially towards those who possess so many endowments as Mademoiselle. Those mischievous English people, whom we so often meet with the old English beau, Sir Raff, (who dresses like a priest and looks like a riding-master,) have promulgated that you are in love with the Comte de Lanville; that you came to Rome only to meet him; that it was an old affair in England, which his family broke off, as a *mésalliance*; that his sister’s husband sold his estates in England solely to put an end to the connection. All this, I know, has been repeated by Sir Raff, in several of the best Roman houses, to which Anatolie St. Martin has access.”

“But what signifies his repeating that which is utterly false?”

“I know it to be false, because I was fortunately present at your first meeting with the

Comte de Lanville, and heard *his* statement of the case. But others are less well informed. You must therefore, indeed, be careful. You must not afford a colouring to these wicked inventions by going so often to the Palazzo Rinuccini."

"On the contrary," said Nannie, with the indignation natural to a person deeply injured; "knowing the charge to be groundless,—knowing that Monsieur de Lanville is no more to me than one of the figures in the tapestry in his saloon,—I shall certainly make no change in my conduct towards him."

"Then you will do wrong. Then you will in time repent your obstinacy," persisted the duenna.

"To-morrow is the birthday of little Eugénie. Her mother has long insisted that I should make one of a small *soirée* given by the Prince de Courtrai to commemorate the day. She has even ordered a white dress for me; fancying black unlucky for such an occasion. I

had written her a note, entreating her to excuse me, unwilling as I am to break through previous resolutions. But after what you have told me, I shall not dispatch my letter; or rather, I shall write another, accepting the invitation. This vile slander would be confirmed indeed, if I allowed it to actuate my conduct."

"Compose yourself, my poor child!" said Madame Duménil, almost regretting that she had been so communicative, when she saw the breathless state of emotion into which her hints had thrown a person usually so serene. "But still you must not fancy that you, or any one, can defy the censures of the world."

"I *do* defy them!" cried Nannie, with growing spirit. "I do not belong to the world! I neither ask its praise nor seek its hospitality, and may, therefore, brave its malice. During my short life, a sense of duty has ever actuated my conduct. I have done nothing I am ashamed of, and ashamed

I will not be! Of this man, this Sir Ralph Barnardiston—the real origin of the evils he hypocritically attributes to *me*)—I have hitherto said nothing. Why should he attack a defenceless girl, who has no father or brother to take her part?”

“*Because* she has nor father nor brother to take her part! Your Sir Raff is like mercenaries in war-time. His hand is against every one but those who purchase his services. But there are many Sir Ruffs in the world, *ma Náni*; and——”

The worthy duenna's homily was happily interrupted by the entrance of the Comtesse de Lanville, who came dancing into the room, to embrace her *charmante Lucille*, in acknowledgment of a beautiful little frock, embroidered in a style worthy the scholar of poor Mrs. Varnham, which had occupied Miss Balfour for some weeks past, in order to be worn by Eugénie on her birthday.

“I shall begin to be jealous,” said Madame

de Lanville, "and to fancy you love this little creature better than me. But you have tears in your eyes, *chère*? What—what is the matter?"

Madame Duménil, certain, from her experience of the candour of her charge, that she would relate to the Countess all she had been hearing, made an eager sign to her to forbear. The old court lady knew enough of human nature to surmise that, though the wife of Léonce might utterly discredit the imputation cast on her friend, she would not like Miss Balfour the better for being publicly pointed out as her rival.

But her precaution was thrown away. Every syllable was calmly recounted;—no, not calmly—but impartially; and a kindling fire in the eyes of Eglantine responded to the narrative.

"Infamous! Shameful!" cried she, at the end of Nannie's explanation. "Who could have the cruelty to annoy you with all this trash,—trash without a grain of foundation,

and unworthy a thought. Why, my dear child, I heard the whole story at least three weeks ago; and only feared lest it should come to your knowledge, and deprive me of a friendship I value so dearly. Your countryman, the old *freluquet*, whispered it, through Cardinal Chigi, to my brother; who, knowing the real state of the case, thought the old creature's attempt to turn the tables an excellent joke. Léonce and I, however, remembering the fable of the boy and the frogs, were of a different opinion; and it was as much as I could do to prevent my husband from calling the mischief-monger to account: since a serious explanation between them would only serve to accredit rumours at present vague and floating."

"And you never said a word to me on the subject!"

"Why torment you? Clémence and Eugénie would never forgive me, if they thought I had subjected you to a moment's pain. But

de Lanville, "and to fancy you love this little creature better than me. But you have tears in your eyes, *chère*? What—what is the matter?"

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"And you never said a word to me on the subject!"

"Why torment you? Clémence and Eugénie would never forgive me, if they thought I had subjected you to a moment's pain. But

take my advice, *ma Lucille*. Pardon me, Madam," she continued, turning to Madame Duménil, whom she justly suspected to be the origin of Miss Balfour's tears, "pardon me, if I encroach upon your privilege as a counsellor. But take my advice, and treat these idle scandals with the contempt they deserve; or you will have Lord Garstang, or some other of your admirers, taking up the gauntlet in your defence, and making it a public quarrel."

The value of this social wisdom, Nannie was not qualified to appreciate. She was more disposed to dwell on the origin of her undeserved wrongs, than on the means of redress. She had been warned by her wiser cousin, she had been warned by her "affectionate H. Brent," that her want of knowledge of the world would betray her into some pitfall; and they were so far justified. Even the almost religious seclusion of her life, had not borne her blameless.

She began to wish she had never quitted her remote Dale, with its wrangling beck, and painful memories. There, she was beloved ; there, she was respected ; there, if sad at heart, she could dwell upon the past, beside the grave of the parents by whom she had been cherished, of the friend by whom she had been idolized.—In Rome, all was a blank !

Alas ! poor Nannie ! How bitter was becoming her initiation into the lessons of life, through

the sore ills

That vex and desolate our mortal days ;
Wide-wasting ills ; — yet each the immediate
source

Of mightier good : their keen necessities,
To ceaseless action goading human thought..

CHAPTER XI.

It was, perhaps, the painful consciousness of her grievances, or perhaps the pleasing consciousness of seeing herself for the first time embellished by the enhancement of full dress, that imparted so becoming an air of embarrassment to Miss Balfour, when, leaning on the arm of Madame de Lanville, she traversed the lofty apartments of the Palazzo Rinuccini, on the night of the birth-day *fête*.

Her dress, selected by the Countess, was of plain white crape; her fine hair was without ornament. Still, from the transparency of

her complexion, and contour of her figure, she had the appearance of being far more adorned than certain Roman Princesses, who had assumed their ill-set diamonds and robes of brocade, in honour of the day. The shyness which, in so large an *assemblage* (enormous to Nannie, who had never before seen fifty persons collected in a room), almost inclined her to hide her face on the shoulder of her companion, endowed her with a charm, rare indeed, in such assemblies ; among *blasé roués*, and fastidious women of the world.

“ My brother and Léonce insisted that Eugénie should be kept up till you arrived,” whispered Madame de Lanville, to her *charmante Lucille*. “ But the poor little thing is nearly dead with sleep ; so come and release her by a kiss. We shall find her with her father.”

But though indeed half asleep, at sight of her dear “ Nâniche,” the child burst into exclamations of joy that attracted the attention

of the whole room : and nothing but being taken into the arms of her friend would content her. Léonce remonstrated in vain. But the standers-by, who had sympathised in his anxiety lest Miss Balfour's dress should be crushed, changed their opinion when they saw the charming *tableau* created by that lovely child in the arms of that lovely girl. A general murmur of admiration arose in the room. Universal was the regret that some artist of merit was not present, to [perpetuate the picture.

For it was only too evanescent. The little girl was wisely borne off to bed by the Countess ; while Miss Balfour remained in the saloon, under the chaperonage of Léonce.

“ Hitherto, you have only worked wonders,” said he. “ But, now, Mademoiselle, you are accomplishing miracles. Garstang is here, with his hair carefully brushed, and in a new coat,—yes, positively. He should not have come upon us in this reformed state, all at

once. He should have brightened at first only one half of his person, and exhibited himself, like the *toiles* in a picture-cleaner's, half-clean, half-dirty. And all this trouble taken by the laziest of mankind for your sake!—as I shall leave him to explain in person.”

When Lord Garstang approached, accordingly, the Count ceded at once his place beside Miss Balfour; whom he had been unwilling to leave companionless among strangers, during his wife's absence.

Either the consciousness of a new coat embarrassed him, as much as that of arms and shoulders uncovered for the first time to public view, distressed the modest Nannie; or the beauty of Miss Balfour was too much for him; for he was far less flippant than usual.

“You meet only friends here to-night—warm friends,” said he, gliding into the vacant place by her side.

"Every person in the room is a stranger to me."

"Strangers are often our best friends. But I meant that your enemies have been carefully excluded. *Pas sans peine!* That English *clique* manages to creep in, wherever a key-hole is left open. The moment they discovered there was to be a small, or as they call it *select* function here, to-night, a shower of little notes arrived from the Princess this, and Marchioness the other, soliciting invitations for their distinguished English friends, Milédi Varburton Vast and her daughters. It was easy to answer a Princess that it was a *fête de famille*, not a diplomatic circle: and that 'no strangers were admitted.' But Sir Ralph made *his* attack à brûle-pourpoint, through Cardinal Riario Sforza, and refusal was more difficult; the Prince being on his good behaviour towards the Sacred College. However, Madame de Lanville took the negotiation into her own hands, and declared to her

brother, (who, doating upon her, humours her little wilfulnesses), that if that odious man were allowed to intrude upon the party, she would not appear. Poor Courtrai gave way, of course. Mild men usually do when bullied. One of those little humbugging notes which women only can indite, set the matter at rest. And yonder, you see, is the Cardinal—no whit affronted.”

“ I am grieved that so much trouble should have been taken on my account,” said Miss Balfour.

“ No, no !—That so often criminal virtue called clemency, would have been thoroughly out of place,” replied Lord Garstang. “ If we adopt the Arabian proverb, that the friends of our friends are our friends, we must adopt the parallel, and treat the enemies of our friends as our enemies. Besides, though unable to second the opinion of old Montaigne, that a liar should be burnt alive, because, he says, as we are men, and communicate with our

fellow-creatures only by speech, to violate the privilege by false speaking, is a crime, I both think and feel that such gratuitous slanderers as Barnardiston should be turned out of society : as, in the sequel, they usually are."

"Most abuses right themselves in time," said Nannie. "But I had rather not dwell upon Sir Ralph or his sins—the origin of irreparable evil to one I dearly love. Let us rather talk of little Eugénie and her birth-day. How pretty she looked in her new frock ! I hope you admired my handiwork ?"

"I admire everything you do—because you do nothing for effect. But Madame de Lanville is forming a quadrille. Will you not dance ?"

"I never dance. That is one of the things that *ought* to be done for effect ; and I dance badly. Were it otherwise, however, to dance in mourning is out of the question."

"You don't appear to be in mourning to-night. You look as white as a swan, or rather

as silvery as an angel. I, too, dance so seldom that it might be called never ;—also, because I dance vilely ; and still more, because I detest useless exertion.”

“ For which reason, you are a fox-hunter ! ”—

“ Exercise is exertion for a good purpose. Besides, at Mardyke, fox-hunting is a filial duty. The little popularity enjoyed by our family in the county, or, to speak more correctly, the sole counterbalance to our odium, lies in the kennel. At present, as in more illustrious cases, popular hatred of the sovereign vents itself in homage to the heir-apparent. But there will come a time when, as a belted earl, I must make good my cause in the eyes of the shire, by staunchness in the saddle. So I go through the annual penalty, of the chase, in order to render it easier at last.”

“ But *must* all abuses and all follies be perpetuated ? ” inquired Miss Balfour. “ Can you hit upon no nobler method of propitiating your county neighbours and dependants than

by breaking down their fences and trampling their corn?"

"I'm afraid not. In England sportsmanship is a national virtue. The public does not half recognise the abilities and conscientiousness of Peel; because he wants pluck, and rides like a tailor. The many-headed monster is ill to please. Study for them—work for them—think for them—feel for them: bad precedents inspire them with distrust. They fancy you are studying, working, thinking and feeling, for place and profit. God knows, I want neither. But were I to write like E. H., or speak like St. Paul, they would still withhold their confidence; convinced that I had in view a secretaryship of state, and not the good of the people. But when they see me take a fence in good style, they are ever ready to cry, 'Well done!'"

"What ardent court your young lord is paying to his pretty countrywoman," said more than one Monsignore, after watching

the foregoing conversation, to Léonce and the Countess, little suspecting what an explosion of egotism constituted the courtship of the rising young man.

"The fact is," resumed Lord Garstang, who, like Monsieur Jourdain, had been talking a prodigious quantity of prose all his life, without finding it out, "I am preparing, as in duty bound, to be all my father has been before me. The influence of a place like Mardyke Castle clings to a man like the robe of Nessus, and infallibly destroys him. You have seen Mardyke, Miss Balfour?"

"I have seen the woods in the distance, when riding across the moors with my father: the house never."

"What a strange lack of curiosity! The pictures are first-rate. The elevation of the façade too is a *chef-d'œuvre*. Living so near, I wonder you never visited the castle."

"My parents were placed below the range of its hospitalities."

“ But there are regular show-days, twice a-week.”

“ My parents were, perhaps, superior to the vulgar appetite for sight-seeing. They loved and visited Hawkshill (which Lord Mardyke destroyed), because it was their former home.”

“ Shall I undertake to re-establish it, when the estate comes into my possession ?”

“ Who can re-establish the past !” said Nannie, without noticing the implied compliment. “ Providence has willed everything on earth to be transitory. I have survived my parents, as my father survived Hawkshill. The future demands new castles of its own.”

This was so much the philosophy of her companion, who often wished that every existing library could share the fate of the Alexandrian, in order that the wisdom of our ancestors might become traditional, and epitomised knowledge be sown and reaped

annually, like any other harvest, that he was not entitled to dissent.

“By the way, we are likely to have room enough shortly for castle-building to any extent,” he replied. “The fair young *Muscadin* yonder, valseing with Princess Doria, my cousin Lord Ernest Crawford (a goose’s feather out of the Downing Street standish), arrived here this morning, on his way to Naples; bringing news from England, that the King’s death is hourly expected.”

“Was Lord Ernest despatched hither to announce it?”

“On the contrary, he was probably instructed to state that his Majesty was never better in his life. Such is the etiquette on such occasions. When bulletins declare that a sick sovereign has passed an excellent night, and that his pulse is tranquil, order your mourning! My good cousin had leave of absence to visit Rome for the solemnities of Easter week; and having contracted official,

that is dilatory habits, in Downing Street, made his appearance exactly two months too late."

"But in what way does this sad intelligence afford scope for Castle building?"

"Every new reign affords scope for it. But in the present case, we must weigh seriously our bricks and mortar. The life of this last of the Georges,—atom as he is in the great scale of history, has afforded a safety-valve to the fermentation of public opinion. When he dies, an explosion is certain. When he dies, the signal rocket will go up. When he dies, it will be cried in every European country, as in Hofer's Tyrolean outbreak — *S'ist Zeit!* And so, I am hastening home, to look after my flocks and herds, and little sisters, who might be trampled down in the *mêlée*."

"But surely the monarchy cannot be in danger, when you speak almost in a tone of exultation?"

“ One’s gamut is not always to be trusted. My *principles* are those of Robert Burns :—

Who will not sing God save the King,
Let him hang as high as the steeple ;
But while we sing God bless the King,
Let us never forget the People.

To say the truth, Miss Balfour, I am not sorry that the tug of war between king and people, as regards parliamentary reform, should occur in my father’s time, rather than my own. As the proprietor of a couple of rotten boroughs, my heart might grow as hard as Pharaoh’s. There are moments, even now, when I feel the teeth and claws of the lion’s whelp sprouting.”

“ But on the continent ! Surely you do not apprehend any immediate change on the continent ? ” said Nannie, who was almost tired of hearing of his sensations.

“ I long to say both immediate and terrible ;—for the chance of frightening you home.

Why, in fact, are you staying here? Every one is leaving Rome."

"Our friends in this house will be here, or at Sorrento, for a month to come."

"Because the Prince de Courtrai has duties to perform. Between ourselves, it is whispered that his mission was created for him, expressly to get him out of reach of the Brussels malcontents. Quiet and dull as he looks, Courtrai is one of the most turbulent of politicians. The dismemberment of Belgium and Holland is now imminent. As to France, the slightest imprudence on the part of the present ministry, would cleave the last prop of the throne of the Bourbons."

"But not of the throne of *France*?"

"Who can say? For my own part, I foresee, though far in the distance, the re-concentration of the Bonaparte family. Even here, how they hang together! Wherever they go, what a tendency in all and each to intellectual distinction! If the young Duke

of Reichstadt were not enfeebled in mind and body by the admixture of Austrian blood, I would bet upon his being crowned at Nôtre Dame, before the young Princess Victoria is crowned at Westminster. If I were talking to my friend Hildyard, I would say—

Ceu flamina prima

Quum deprensa fremunt silvis, et cœca volutant
Murmura, venturos nautis prodentia ventos.”

“But you are *not* talking to my cousin Ely, and I don’t understand you,” rejoined Nannie, discouragingly.

“Will you let me state then, in such words as cousin Ely would use to discuss baubles like crowns and sceptres, that

Squirrels for nuts contend; and, wrong or
right,

For the world’s empire, kings, ambitious fight.
What odds? To us, ’tis all the self-same thing;
A nut, a world, a squirrel, or a king.”

“Again allow me to dissent. My cousin would say nothing of the kind. Ely is the

last person to be caught by the jingle of a 'vile antithesis,' to the detriment of his better judgment. He would be as deeply shocked as I am by the prospect of national disturbance, either in his own country or any other."

"I am afraid the learned Pundit of the Propaganda is making a casuist of you, Miss Balfour, as well as an archæologist!" retorted Lord Garstang, a little piqued.

"He is making me neither the one nor the other," replied Nannie composedly. "My lessons of the Abbate Bartolomeo, terminated some weeks ago."

"It was in the character of a friend, then, —more dangerous far than that of a professor —that he was calling this morning in the Strada della Longura?" inquired Lord Garstang, significantly.

A vivid blush was the irrepressible reply. But after a moment's pause, Miss Balfour took courage to remark that her remote quarter of Rome appeared to have peculiar attractions

for his Lordship, since he was able to take such exact note of her visitors.

“I am a professed pedestrian,” said he, laughing; “and among my favourite haunts are the Gardens of the Farnesina—to say nothing of occasional pilgrimages to St Onofrio. The grave of the unhappy poet, the only victim on authentic record of ambitious love, is full of instruction.”

“Instruction to princesses! Who would ever have heard of Leonora d’Este but for the verses of Torquato Tasso? Her insignificant name has been preserved for posterity in the amber of his genius.”

“A glorious vocation, certainly, that of the poet,” observed her companion, wistfully, willing, perhaps, to distract her attention from his watchfulness over her movements—“to be not only immortal, but able to confer immortality!—It was said on the death of Milton, that Space was his only fitting abode, and Eternity his only adequate day.—But without

soaring to such exaggerated eulogy, I cannot help feeling that poets are as much the guardians of the soul of their century, as the Bench of Bishops or Bench of Judges.—The writer of a demoralising poem betrays his trust.”

“ If you don’t intend to talk Miss Balfour to extinction,” suddenly interrupted the Comte de Lanville, hurrying towards them between the figures of a *contredanse*, “ take care that she has a *sorbet*, or some lemonade, without delay. She looks sadly fatigued.”

But the hint sufficed to instigate Nannie to the assumption of a more cheerful countenance.—Fatigued and anxious she really was ; but it would have been quite as unsatisfactory to have it suspected that the scandals of the English coterie weighed upon her mind, as that Lord Garstang, or any other person, should connect her want of spirits with the visit she had that morning received from the Abbate Bartolomeo. She returned home weary

and heartsick. Madame Duménil had promised herself to demonstrate, by some degree of coldness, her displeasure that her advice had been so completely disregarded. But when the poor girl threw aside her cloak, on entering the saloon where the duenna was sitting up for her, her appearance so startled the old lady, that she lost all desire to chide.

Her own spirits were, on the other hand, at fever heat.—She had been spending the evening in one of those Bonapartean circles, which were beginning to assume consistency and purpose in proportion to the manifestation of incompetency and unpopularity on the part of the Bourbons. Presentiments of future power, over-sanguine, though, as experience has proved, far from fallacious, concentrated them into a gradually brightening focus ; and poor Madame Duménil already fancied herself lodged for the remainder of her days in a *mansarde* of the Pavillon de Marsan, or an *entresol* of the Château of Versailles.

"It is an irrefragable certainty, my child," said she, "that Paris is on the eve of an *émeute*. The most urgent, the most interesting, intelligence has this day reached the friends of the Violet—you understand me?—and we, whose life is a life of hope, are beginning to hail the sun of a new day."

Nannie, who, on her entrance, had thrown herself into a seat, weary and dejected, could scarcely refrain from tears at the sounding of a keynote so little in unison with her feelings.

"I could almost wish," said Madame Duménil, too full of her own prospects to perceive Miss Balfour's depression,—“that is, I *could* have wished, if we saw more of her, and she still continued to visit here, that you would afford a word of warning to your pretty school-fellow, who starts to-morrow, I am told, for Paris, escorted by that terrible Sir Raff.”

"Thank Heaven, at least, that he is about to quit Rome!" exclaimed Nannie, fervently.

“Nay, it is even rumoured he has received a hint that his departure is desirable. He talks too recklessly. And now that his patrons, the Cardinals, have lost all hope of converting him, and have discovered that he is a man without consequence of any kind in his own country, they are vexed at having wasted their notice on him.—*D’ailleurs*, it seems he has offended the Prince de Courtrai, who is just now in the highest favour with His Holiness. The Prince’s brother, you know, is Archbishop of Malines.”

Nannie did *not* know, and cared still less. She was in haste to retire to her own room;—in haste to be alone.—On the eve of a great resolution, she was eager to commend herself to the protection and enlightenment of Heaven, and to the Wisdom that cometh in the watches of the night.

CHAPTER XII.

THE visit of the accomplished Abbate to the Strada della Longara, that morning, was an event fraught with importance to the future peace of Nannie Balfour. Hitherto, she had regarded herself as one secretly wedded ;—henceforward she was as a widow !

Though the learned Jesuit had long relinquished all hope of gaining credit by enlisting the lovely English heiress in his corps of converts, he had a strong personal interest in favour of one so young, so good, so gracious ; and, having been liberally remunerated for his instructions, was eager to render her any service in his power.

When, therefore, having incidentally mentioned, in reference to the state of the Catholic church in Great Britain, that he had a near relative a professor of the Italian language at St. Gideon's, in Lancashire, Miss Balfour signified her anxious desire to obtain from the Superior intelligence of one Maurice Varnham, a former pupil in the college, he readily undertook to obtain it for her.

The answer was slow in coming ; but it was decisive. "No individual of the name of Varnham had ever been enrolled among the students of St. Gideon's."

What could this mean? The intelligence was authentic ; for the original letter of the Principal, Father Joseph of the Order of Jesus, bearing the English post-mark, was placed in her hands. But could Maurice have thus deceived her? His descriptions of St. Gideon's, of its privations, its penances, were too circumstantial to have been pure invention. He had, perhaps, been placed there under a

feigned name ; or, more probably still, that of Varnham was assumed. The history of his mother and himself had from the first been enveloped in mystery. How,—*how* was the clue to this hopeless labyrinth to be obtained ?

Of one thing she felt convinced. Either that, as was asserted by the firm of Macglashan, Maurice had ceased to exist ; or that to her he was dead for ever. It was impossible but that, if alive, he must have been apprised of the death of his mother. It was impossible but that, if apprised, he must have written to Middledale for intelligence of her last moments.

Nearly three years had now elapsed. To delay longer, was preposterous. She would open the letter !

It was easily said. It was almost easily resolved. But when, amid the darkness of the night, in the stillness of the small hours, and the hush of a sleeping household, in all the exhaustion consequent upon a day of ex-

citement, she applied the key to the lock of the casket, a death-like faintness came over her. She had first to remove the two miniatures stationed as if to guard the sacred deposit, like the souls of slaves killed by their masters, in the heathen world, to watch over a hidden treasure ;—the golden haired child, the dark-browed youth, so idolised by the fond mother who had entrusted her last earthly cares to her keeping. Was it not a violation of that trust she was meditating? Was she not as desirous to emancipate her own heart and hand from thralldom, as to render justice to a friend in the grave?

She trembled. She even replaced the miniatures on the packet, as though their influence could preserve it from violation. Tears came rolling down. Sobs burst from her breast. The names of Maurice and his mother were involuntary mingled, in a fervent prayer for departed souls!—

A moment afterwards, reason resumed its

influence. A sense of duty towards herself, prevailed. These people had injured her—had *deceived* her.—Was she to remain through life the slave of a chimera?

At the instigation of that impulse, with a wild effort, almost with a shriek, she tore open the packet. And in a moment, she was exonerated for the act; for the first enclosure that met her eye, was legibly addressed, “To Nannie.”

How did she reproach herself, at that moment, for her long hesitation! Her name inscribed in that well-known handwriting, seemed like a voice addressing her from the dead. The room she sat in, Rome itself, faded around her. She was back at Hawyer's Cottage. The scent of burnt rosemary habitually pervading its atmosphere, even the subdued light created by its window overgrown with vines, seemed to surround her, as of old.

“This will be delivered to you by Maurice,

dearest Nannie," wrote her poor friend. "Before it reaches your hand, he will have explained to you the fatal secret over-clouding our lives ;—the ignominious end of his miserable father. Till fully apprised of it, my son has no right to seek you as a wife.

"It is of myself, Nannie, I am now about to speak ; for even in the grave, I would fain retain the good opinion of my adopted child.

"My father, of whom I was the only child, was, as he will have told you, a rigid Catholic, as well as an austere man ; a widower, resident in one of the most secluded parts of Ireland—without other friends or associates than the priests of his faith. My mother died within a year of my birth ; worn down by her husband's harshness and estrangement from the charities and joys of life. At ten years old, I was sent for my education to a convent of Clares, in the south of Ireland ; where for six years I remained, if not happy, unrepining. But when the period arrived for my return

to my desolate home, I was in such despair at the prospect, that I ventured to write to my father entreating his permission to take the veil, in the convent where I had been so long a boarder. His reply was an indignant negative. He had other views for me. In a year, I was to be married. He did not even deign to inform me to whom ; but gave me to understand that my future husband had been selected by Father Urban, his confessor. Such arrangements, among the Catholics of that period, were only too common.

“I resigned myself ; but I was wretched. Shortly afterwards, by what connivance I have never yet been able to understand, letters breathing the fondest admiration reached my hands, from one who professed to have seen me in the convent chapel. My reputation as an heiress constituted, perhaps, my attraction ; but at sixteen, I was only too ready to believe that it lay in my personal charms.

“The correspondence lasted for weeks,—for months. At length an interview was contrived; an interview which enabled my lover, who had himself little more than attained his majority, to propose an elopement. Only a few weeks intervened between the period appointed for my quitting the convent. I was unadvised—desperate. The idea of that harsh, grim home, from which I was only to be transferred to that of a stranger, equally distasteful, appalled me.

“I cannot better describe to you, Nannie, the man in whose hands my unlucky fate placed all these opportunities of mischief, than by telling you that he was Maurice,—older, handsomer, and far more ingratiating. On *his* part, no prayers, no efforts, were spared to engage my affections; and it was not wonderful that a young girl, to whom even the voice of kindness was unfamiliar, should be susceptible to the eloquence of love.

“Within a week of the time appointed for

my return to my father's castle, I fled from the convent. We were married by both Catholic and Protestant rites ; the latter, as I was a minor, by special license.

“To avoid a public scandal, which would have been injurious to the establishment, the Superioress of St. Clare communicated the event privately to my father, entreating to have it passed over in silence. But he was inexorable. He was resolved to bring the offender to justice. My elopement was comparatively nothing. Want of birth and fortune on the part of my husband were comparatively nothing. But I had not only married a Protestant, but compelled my father to break faith with one of the first Catholic noblemen in the land.

“My husband, on the other hand, indignant at the insults heaped upon him, made it his first prayer to me, or, perhaps I should say, *exact*ed it as my first act of obedience, that I should embrace the Protestant faith. All I

had witnessed of priestly influence over the mind of my father, certainly inclined me to conversion. But, not to weary you with my religious scruples, I eventually complied ; adopting the creed which legalised my marriage, and would render legitimate the birth of my expected child. All I then desired was to place myself out of reach of my father's persecution. I have since, better instructed, learned to bless the day that emancipated me from the errors of Papistry.

“ My husband was aware that I was entitled, by my late mother's settlements, to a sum of ten thousand pounds ; for payment of which, my father was applied to, in legal form. He not only resisted, however, but, in the event of our persisting in the demand, threatened a prosecution for abduction and sacrilege. The feud between us was exasperated on either side by the intervention of priests and lawyers ; and abusive letters were followed by personal menaces.

“In the meantime, Nannie, we endured the bitterest privations of poverty. My husband was a friendless pauper, who, I fear, had counted largely on my fortune. His associates were, alas! of that low order who suggest discreditable expedients. At the time the birth of Maurice was expected, I was all but starving, and had not where to lay my head! My son saw the light—why should I conceal it?—in a public hospital!”

In a public hospital!—Maurice, so haughty, —so defiant!—Miss Balfour shuddered as she reflected how deeply the consciousness of such humiliation must have wrought upon his arrogant nature.

“When eventually forced, with my infant in my arms, to quit this charitable retreat, it was to find refuge in the most miserable of hovels. During the interval of my absence, my unfortunate husband, penniless and despairing, had fallen into the worst habits and lowest company. All I heard from him were

execrations of my father's malicious and grasping disposition, which kept us out of our own ; and what would it have availed me to reproach him in turn that he had represented himself as possessing sufficient means for our support ? Yet I was sometimes tempted to speak, when he reviled me—more than reviled—had recourse to blows,—because the care of my child interfered with the work by which, for many preceding months, I had obtained our bread.

“I tell you all this, my child, not to move your pity ; for though the habits of my father's house were luxurious, of late years, the hardness and frugality of convent rule had inured me to privation. But I tell it to explain—to palliate, if palliation be possible—the fault—the *crime*—which has since weighed so heavily on my head and that of my innocent son.

“One unhappy day, after listening all night to the cries of his child, caused by the starvation of its nursing mother, who, lying on bare

boards, could afford it neither warmth nor food, my husband—*my* Maurice—attempted to procure a small sum of money by forging the name of my father to an order on his agent. He had studied the hand-writing—ill-omened opportunity!—in his signature to the frightful letter conveying his malediction.—And well did the curse prosper! The money was paid.—I was warmed and fed, little suspecting the source of that fatal relief. But suspicion was already aroused; and on a second attempt, a few weeks afterwards, my husband was taken into custody on a charge of forgery—tried—condemned!

“I cannot dwell, Nannie, on those horrible details. He had no friends—no money to secure the aid of counsel.—My father had both; and prosecuted him, not openly, but in the name of his agent, with unrelenting malice. The priests by whom he was surrounded, enraged by my apostacy, left no argument untried to aggravate his vindictive spirit.

“With my infant in my arms, I walked, nearly barefoot, to that house of which I was the heiress ; and by the interposition of a kind old servant, obtained access to his presence. But the sight of the ragged wretches whom his persecutions had brought to such an extremity of misery, seemed to exasperate him to madness, as he sat propped up in his chair, paralytic, yet raging in his helplessness. I knelt at his feet, and received a blow from his uplifted crutch, which laid me senseless. In that state, I was thrust from his gates, and placed, by the charity of his servants, with a small sum of money in my pocket, in a public conveyance ; to bear me back to the county town where my husband lay in prison, awaiting the execution of his sentence !—

“In these more humane and more enlightened days, Nannie, such a sentence could not be carried out. To stay the execution, the press would interfere. The peculiar hardship of the case,—the mutual relations of the

parties,—would be pointed out ; for, happily, the blood-thirsty old laws of commercial England have been modified into a more Christian spirit. In the times I speak of, one hundred persons were made to atone by their lives for forgery, in various parts of the kingdom, in a single day : one hundred human lives !—while crimes of deadlier magnitude were comparatively lightly punished.

“ At the last dreadful crisis, Nannie, the moment when, at eighteen, I took leave, in a condemned cell, of the father of my child, of whose humiliating end I was the remote though innocent cause, my reason failed me. I was removed from thence to a lunatic asylum :—my son—my more than orphan—to a work-house.

“ From thence, but not till years had elapsed, my father's pride, not his pity, redeemed the boy. Do what he would (for he had attempted to brand my poor Maurice with illegitimacy), my boy must be the heir of his honours. As

such, he claimed and obtained possession of him. As such, he caused him to be re-baptized into the Catholic church. As such, he gave him reluctant shelter under his roof; never seeing him—never caressing him. His outcast grandchild was as a pariah in the house.

“From thence, already harassed and heart-worn, the boy, no longer bearing his father’s name, was dispatched to St. Gideon’s.

“Nannie! must I account it a mercy of providence that, with events so grievous to confront, it pleased God to restore me to reason?—Better, perhaps, had I moaned out the remainder of my days in my miserable cell! When dismissed from the county lunatic asylum—driven forth for the second time in my life from a refuge for paupers,—my child had forgotten me! But, alas! my father remembered me only too well. On applying to him for the means of subsistence, and the custody of my son, I was informed by his

agents, Macglashan and Thorp, that, having forfeited by my misconduct all claim upon my family, if I persisted in 'molesting my venerable parent, an application would be made to the Lord Chancellor, setting forth the execution of the father of Maurice, with which, as yet, our family name was not publicly connected; when the custody of the boy would unquestionably be assigned to his grandfather, whose rank he was to inherit.'

"If, on the contrary, I consented to leave him where his education and welfare were liberally provided for, a small allowance was to be supplied me. What was the alternative? Ignorance and degradation for my son,—destitution for both. I dared not refuse. I dared not cause that young boy to be thrown friendless on the world, as it had so disastrously chanced to his father.

"And thus it was that, a condition having been added that my future abode must be in

England, in some remote spot, where the secret of my shame was unknown, I abided for years in the suburbs of Liverpool, and was occasionally permitted an interview with my son. At length, even this indulgence was withheld. I was required to remove further from St. Gideon's: and my father's agents, Macglashan and Thorp, selected Middledale for my future abode. My father, aged, infirm, and more than ever under the domination of his confessor, still survives; if that can be called life which consists of the stagnation of every natural impulse.

“And now, Nannie, resolve whether *you*, the child of honest parents, the heiress of an honourable independence, can consent to unite your fate with one whose name is tainted with so indelible a blot! During my alienation of mind, the wretched boy was made acquainted (wisely or cruelly, who shall say?) with the terrible end of his father. It was *that*, preying on his young mind, which ren-

ders him at times so irritable — so morose. On his first visit to Hawyer's Cottage, he conditioned with me that nothing should ever tempt me to divulge this horrible secret to a living soul ; for never widely bruited, even in Ireland, the tradition has gradually died away.

“But when I perceived, Nannie, the growing attachment between you, I resolved that, be the penalty what it might, as regarded you and yours, to defy this prohibition. The misunderstanding that arose between you and Maurice previous to his rash departure from Middledale, prevented further recurrence to the subject. But now,—sick, feeble, dying,—I have with difficulty penned these lines, to spare to my dear son the anguish of details so humiliating.

“Should this letter, therefore, ever be remitted to you by Maurice, it will be on the eve of offering you his hand. To *him* be the happiness of acquainting you with all he will be hereafter entitled to lay at the feet of his wife. To *me*, the bitter task I have felt

it my duty to undertake. In a better world, my child—my darling Nannie—may we meet again !”

Such, then, was the terrible mystery which had enveloped the miserable life of the poor cripple. Such were the “backslidings of her youth :”—contumacy to a tyrannical father, apostasy to an idolatrous Church ! But Maurice. Why had he persisted in misleading his loving playmate, as to his name, his connections, his prospects in life ? While they lived together in hand-in-hand companionship, he had systematically deceived her ; perhaps with the purpose aforethought of future estrangement. The son of the forger had clearly inherited the nature of his least worthy parent.

But to “draw his frailties from their dead abode,” would have been henceforward invidious. The grave afforded him plenary absolution.

But not the less for this charitable resolution did poor Nannie, with Mrs. Varnham's letter still lying open in her lap, admit that she was "a widow indeed." Her girlhood had been spent in vain. Her brightest days had been squandered on a vision. Her sole comfort lay in the thought that, into the broken heart of that most unhappy woman, she had poured affection and consolation.

Henceforward, she would recur no more to memories connected with so much that was terrible,—so much that was revolting. Her life must begin anew. There was nothing—no, not one single recollection connected with Maurice that served to consecrate her reminiscences, or redeem the errors of the past !

CHAPTER XIII.

FOR many succeeding days, Nannie pleaded indisposition as a pretext for secluding herself from the idle prattle of Madame Duménil. When at length she emerged from her room, the exclamation of the giddy-tongued old lady, "*Juste ciel*, how pale you look! You must have been *really* ill!" proved that she had imagined other motives than physical ailment for Miss Balfour's seclusion and want of spirits.

"So ill," replied Nannie, "that I am persuaded Rome disagrees with me, and have determined to leave it next week."

"Impossible, my child, impossible. So many arrangements to make!"

"They are nearly made. I have already obtained from my banker the requisite funds: already apprised Hermann; already given notice to our proprietor, and to Marietta."

"You go, of course, then, as you long ago decided, to Sorrento?"—

"No, dear Madame Duménil—*home*. The climate and habits of Italy are injurious to me. You told me just now, that I looked *really* ill."


This was undeniable. But the old lady, was evidently much chagrined by so precipitate a departure. She was vexed at having to quit her venerable chum, Anatolie, and those whom they both qualified as "the family," at a moment when, for the first time for so many years, the prospects of the malcontents were brightening.

Still greater was her vexation on learning, some days afterwards, that Miss Balfour, on

her return towards England, had promised to spend a month with the Lanvilles, at their château at Lanville-sur-Lesse. The Count, having obtained an indulgence from his Holiness, for an annual visit from that dear Sœur Véronique, towards whom the heart of the little *paysanne* yearned as fondly as ever, had persuaded Nannie to meet her under his roof. On this hint, indeed, the duenna thought herself justified in despatching a letter to Jakes Zelters, entreating him to interfere. A letter of remonstrance might reach them on their way through Paris.

One advantage derived by Nannie from her alienation from society, was the full command of her time, for the purpose of a few last pilgrimages to the sites and monuments of which she wished to retain a deeper impression than she had hitherto imbibed. The last days of most travellers are wasted in leaving cards of ceremony. Nannie's were devoted to visits of higher account.

Her first impressions of Rome, its Tiber, its Seven Hills, its ancient monuments, had been thoroughly disappointing. Compared with the visions of an imagination overwrought by classical studies, and inflated by the pompous disquisitions of modern travellers, all appeared insignificant. But by degrees, eye, mind, and heart became influenced by the tranquil atmosphere of the spot. A new standard of taste insensibly formed itself. Miss Balfour, the real object of whose visit was of more serious a nature than the survey of antiquities or palaces, pictures or sculptures, had, as the perplexities of her mind gradually subsided, and the clear light of conviction shone anew in her soul, begun to take eager interest in the *chef-d'œuvres* which the vulgar jargon of *valets-de-place*, and enthusiasm of affected travellers, render at times almost distasteful. She found herself taking leave of Guido's Aurora and Galatea, of Domenichino's Sybil, of Beatrice Cenci, of the Archangel



Michael, of the Apollo, the Laocoon, as though they were friends.

She had reserved for one of her last pleasures, a hurried visit to the Vatican, or rather to its picture of pictures—the Transfiguration. And Madame Duménil having obtained permission to “live one day of parting love” with her dear Anatolie, she was escorted only by old Hermann; when, with tears in her eyes, on quitting the Camera, she was startled by the approach of Lord Garstang; whom she had supposed, according to his announcement, to have already quitted Rome.

“No, not yet gone—not *quite* gone,” said he, in reply to her expressions of surprise. “I have had to perform a host of duties:—salutations to the toe of the *Padre Santo*, and the fair hands of a hundred other old ladies; who, before I again visit the Eternal City, will probably have crumbled away, like other of its ancient monuments.”

"I should be sorry to think that the objects which have received *my* farewell homage would not survive till *my* return," observed Nannie, in a subdued voice,—still penetrated by the grandeur of the unique work she had been contemplating.

"I am afraid I have outlived my faith in the Fine Arts," replied Lord Garstang, carelessly. "I was born and nurtured in it; for my father and two of my uncles possess admirable galleries, and consider it a proof of caste to appreciate them; little suspecting that, by their modes of criticism, they constantly betray their opinion that pictures and statues are a mere investment,—a tangible security,—whose value it is their interest to keep up. *That* view of the case was, I believe, the first cause of my disenchantment."

"But why? No one values Shaksperè's works the less, because they are published and republished as a mercenary speculation."

"By booksellers—it is their vocation. But

when noble lords, with thirty-two quarterings and prodigious rent-rolls, talk of 'getting up the market' for their Claudes, and 'netting' a couple of hundred guineas, by selling for three hundred pounds a Mieris purchased for one, it sickens me with the cant of connoisseurship."

"With the cant of connoisseurship, but surely not with fine pictures?"

"Even there, time and travel have confirmed my scepticism. The more one sees of living landscapes, the less one cares for those of Salvator or Claude—Turner or Ruysdael. Mythological subjects are generally indecent; and sacred ones should, in my opinion, never be seen out of a church or oratory."

"But do you consider the Transfiguration out of place in the Vatican?"

"It was painted for an altar-piece. Pius VII. would have done better to restore it to its original destination, than convert it into an ornament of his museum. To me, on

of the most audacious pieces of blasphemy with which we have familiarised ourselves, is the delineation of sacred mysteries, such as the Creation—the Immaculate Conception—the Nativity—the Transfiguration—the Passion and Death of Christ;—often placed in our galleries side by side with Ledas and Europas—three naked Graces, or the buxom nymphs of some sensuous allegory by Rubens!—A Holy Family in conjunction with the Cenci!—Attempt such an outrage for the first time, and see how modern susceptibility would revolt!”

Nannie was startled. It now struck her with surprise that she had not felt shocked by the first aspect of such juxtaposition.

“For my own part,” he added, “when I hear artists discussing the composition and ‘handling’ of a Holy Family, as mechanically and familiarly as that of one of Landseer’s litters of puppies, I sometimes figure to myself the awe of the first painter who presumed to

attempt such subjects. Let us hope that he painted on his knees ; or rather, let us trust that it was St. Luke ! The heathen idol-makers used to carve their gods out of a stump of wood, and then fall down and worship. But Raphael or Giorgione, or Michael Angelo, who attempted to realise the inscrutable, and painted a Virgin one day and a Venus the next, must have undergone a strange jumble of inspirations. Half of the fine statues of saints in St. Peter's, by the way, have been Jupiters and Apollos in their time."

"It is thought by those whose knowledge and judgment I cannot pretend to dispute," said Miss Balfour, "that the influence of high art has tended greatly to the establishment and promulgation of Christianity."

"There, again, I must withhold my faith," rejoined his Lordship. "Mahommedanism, which, in half the number of centuries, has obtained twice the number of proselytes, in-

terdicts the portraiture of even the human face—how much more of Allah and his Prophet! On the other hand, observe how our ablest artists have vulgarised the grandest of subjects. Look at the horned head of Moses,—the result of mistranslation. The Hebrew word for ‘rays of light,’ which Moses is described as wearing on his brow on his descent from Sinai, signifying also ‘horned’ and being so rendered in the Vulgate, misled the great sculptor.”

“It matters little,” murmured his companion. “The statue is not the less sublime for that one error.”

“Admire, then, the conventional angel of Christian art—a being composed of the body of a schoolboy and wings of a goose! Can we suppose these clumsy appendages, essential to unsubstantial beings to float in the ether of heaven? The very sylphs of the Rosicrucians or sprites of a ballet, are less material than such cumbersome volatiles! No, no!

Subjects so unapproachable should never have been attempted ; or, if executed, should never appear elsewhere than in a church ; whose local sanctity disarms criticism, and where devotional feelings subdue the mind. As the age is becoming daily more refined and delicate, as we no longer tolerate grossness in books, oaths in conversation, or indecency on the stage, who knows but we may become in time sufficiently exalted in feeling to decree that all delineations of religious mysteries shall be confined to the temples of Religion."

"Would Lord Mardyke, do you think, be willing to resign his Raphaels and Domenichinos to his parish church?" inquired Miss Balfour, who, as they had now reached the sixth camera of the suite, containing Raphael's exquisite Madonnas and the Magdalen of Guercino, would rather have devoted her attention to those treasures of art, than to the hair-splitting theories of her companion.

"Lord Mardyke's son will do so, whenever

they come into his possession," said he, "unless, indeed, you forbid it. By the way," he continued, pausing for a reply, which Nannie was wise enough to withhold—"surely you will deign to visit Mardyke, now that you are about to settle in Middledale."

"Who told you I was about to settle in Middledale?"

"Madame Duménil, whom I met just now at Princess Gabrielli's, and who also informed me I was likely to find you here. She assured me you were on the eve of returning '*home*.'"

"On the continent, most people define England as '*home*.'—But of all England, I am least likely to take up my rest in Lancashire. For me, Middledale is replete with painful associations."

"If it did not sound ungracious, I would own I was glad to hear it.—There is a project for carrying a North-Western railroad straight through your happy valley. My father, a principal shareholder in the Liverpool and

Manchester, now about to open, is one of the chief supports of this new speculation, which would double the value of his property, and of your own."

Nannie was startled. Though resolved never again to reside at Gridlands, she was not prepared to say with Chamisso, "Blessed art thou, O ploughshare, which hast razed the home of my fathers."—She could not hear that the green grave-yard, so sacred to her, should be laid open to the desecration of railway traffic. Perhaps, by conciliating Lord Garstang, she might obtain his interference in altering the projected line;—a far dearer object of solicitude than the regeneration of the picture gallery at Mardyke Castle.

"Madame Duménil also acquainted me," said he, attributing her abstracted air to anything but the right cause, "and as she is not remarkable for discretion, I trust she has been less communicative to other people—that you are about to pay a long visit to the Lanvilles,

on your way homewards. As Courtrai and the whole mission started this morning for Brussels, I am unable to ascertain from Léonce whether such be the fact."

"But why should you desire to ascertain it?"

"It would, perhaps, be a decent form of courtesy to say,—in order that I may obtain an invitation to join the party. But I never exceed the truth.—My curiosity arises from a sincere desire to alter your determination."

"Again, I must answer, *why*?"—

"You will be displeased if I tell you; but I risk it. Because such a visit will confirm the malicious reports which Sir Ralph Barnardiston and the Warburton Wasps are conveying to England.—*You* scorn them, *I* laugh at them.—But the Plague has been conveyed over the sea, and communicated to a whole city, before now, by a bundle of rags.—Do not, dear Miss Balfour, afford countenance to the weak inventions of these contemptible people, by—"

Nannie, who, proceeding slowly side by side with the young lord, towards the stairs, had now reached the lobby of the *Loggie*, stopped short, and, with a glowing face, turned suddenly towards him. By nature gentle as a child, all her feminine instincts of wrath were stirred by this ill-advised insinuation.

"*You, too!*" she exclaimed, with the utmost indignation. "Is it possible for any man of generous feeling, to be influenced by the paltry slanders of people he despises!"

Lord Garstang was nearly silenced. He had not dreamed that Miss Balfour's placid countenance could assume such an expression of ire, or her soft voice such an inflexion of defiance.

"I am *not* influenced by them," said he, in a conciliating tone. "But I am willing to spare a friend I love, the pain of hearing your name coupled with injurious imputations."

"If you allude to my cousin Hildyard, trust me he is too noble-minded to be misled by trivial gossip."

“To be *mised*, perhaps. But *that* superiority will not prevent his being pained by its results,” rejoined Lord Garstang, glad that, as she now proceeded to descend the stairs, he was spared the reproof arising from her heightened colour, and the annoyance of exhibiting his own crest-fallen countenance.—They were alone ; for Hermann, seeing his young lady joined by an English friend, had hastened down before them to call up the carriage ; and a few German or French students and artists, “bearded like a pard,” and redolent of tobacco, comprehend, at Midsummer, the loungers of the Roman galleries and museums.

“At all events,” said he, as they reached the last flight of stairs, “grant me your pardon, before we part, for my offence in speaking truths to you which I believe to be wholesome, and which others dare not undertake.—You are so young, so inexperienced, to be a wanderer in foreign countries under the care of a superannuated worldling, and superannuated

servant, that I ventured—that I presumed—” his voice almost faltered,—probably for the first time in his life.

“I owe you no ill-will for anything you have said or done, during our short acquaintance,” said Miss Balfour, firmly, afraid to let him finish the sentence so earnestly begun. “On the contrary, I am anxious that we should part as good friends as we met. For our paths of life are distinct, Lord Garstang. We shall probably never meet again.”

The perfect self-possession with which she uttered this cold farewell, fell like a sheet of lead on her companion. He could not rally his spirits to protest or remonstrate. He was forced to accept his tacit dismissal.—Only, as he placed her in the carriage, which was now in waiting, he wrung her hand with an impulse of despair, which ought to have been the result of hatred rather than affection.

As the carriage drove away, and Nannie perceived her young Mentor, already distant,

cutting with hurried steps, and his hat pulled down over his brow, across the piazza, a sudden pang seemed to impede her breath. Had she then the unhappy faculty of alienating friend after friend? Were all the illusions of her girlhood, all the connections of her youth, to fade, one by one, into dim phantoms of the past, leaving her alone—how *much* alone—in this world of care?—

She was almost glad, on arriving at the Strada della Longara, to find that Madame Duménil was already returned from her round of farewell visits,—more than usually garrulous under the excitement of directions to be given for their approaching journey; to say nothing of visions of future greatness to be indulged in and expounded, arising from the ferment rising and strengthening among the disaffected classes in the turbulent capital of *la belle France*.

She had not even leisure to perceive the agitated looks and tremulous movements of her charge.

CHAPTER XIV.

Two months had elapsed after Miss Balfour's departure from Rome ; and it was a beautiful afternoon at the close of August, clear and sunny, but with a gentle breeze sweeping the lovely valley of the Lesse, and brightening the jutting pinnacles of the rocks under which that mysterious river forces its subterranean channel.

Situated on a lofty eminence among the cliffs, the Château de Lanville, an irregular but imposing structure of the sixteenth century, commands an extensive view of the valley, including the high road leading from Dinant to Luxembourg. Such a site, selected more

with a view to the warlike times in which its foundations were laid, than to the amenities of modern life, lends itself little to the charm of cultivated gardens, or ornamental fountains. But, basking in the southern sun, beneath the extensive façade of the Château, lies a fine terrace; decorated with vases containing flowering shrubs, jotted along an old-fashioned border of lavender and basil.

There, under the shade of a towering magnolia, was placed a sofa, on which reclined poor Nannie, attired in the deepest mourning, and attended by a figure wearing a dress still more lugubrious than her own,—the garb of a Sister of Charity.

At some distance, strolled the young Countess de Lanville, leaning on the shoulder of Madame Duménil; no longer repudiated as a guest, now that her host and hostess had laid aside the diplomatic character which, at Rome, rendered them responsible for their choice of society. They were discussing to-

gether the opinion pronounced that morning by an eminent medical man from Dinant of Miss Balfour's state of health.

Ten days after quitting Rome, she had been attacked by fever ; which the doctors at Milan declared to be the result of the mal'aria of the Campagna, and treated accordingly. But Madame Duménil was even then convinced, and still asserted, that the indisposition of her interesting charge was chiefly produced by mental distress. Low fever might be the symptom ; but the germ of the evil lay in the mind. The signification of this conjecture to Nannie, had proved the means of stimulating her to the exertions which had enabled her to reach Lanville in safety. She could not bear to find herself placed in the missish position of cherishing a secret sorrow,—a worm i' the bud. So little indeed did she deserve the imputation, that, on the very night that made her acquainted with the contents of Mrs. Varnham's testamentary letter, she had re-

closed the packet, reconsigned it to the casket containing the two miniatures, and enveloped and sealed up the whole, to be never more opened or dwelt upon.

Her ailment was purely physical; one of those aguish fevers, so common in Italy; fatal in the olden time, and even now as hard to shake from the afflicted frame as the vulture from that of Prometheus. It is true the evil was aggravated by a harassed mind. On the eve of quitting the Strada della Longara, a letter from her cousin acquainted her with the death of his mother; and though no intensity of affection bound her to aunt Dorty, she was the last living link connecting her with her parents. Her cousin, too, in communicating the event, added that, for a day or two preceding her death, her faculties appeared, as is often the case, to be restored.—“She forgave you, Nannie,” he wrote; “forgave you for having broken the family compact and the heart of her son; and her last tears were shed

over your apostasy from the faith of your parents. Other ill-reports, God be thanked ! were spared her : and, together, we prayed trustfully for your future welfare."

Such words, such insinuations, preyed upon the mind of the already fever-stricken girl. What would she not have given for an hour's conference with the kind writer of these gentle remonstrances ! How cravingly did she want the searching counsel of a friend !

But instead of counsel or comfort, 'perils encompassed her on every side. On arriving at Marseilles, the tri-coloured flag was already displayed on the citadel. Details of the deposition of Charles the Tenth, and the flight of the royal family, filled the papers ; accompanied with details of the three days' carnage, by which those events had been preceded, horrifying, indeed, to two female travellers ; the one nervous from illness—the other from folly !

What was to be done ? Marseilles was in

a state of excitement that rendered even a few hours' sojourn scarcely endurable; and old Hermann was of opinion that they should push on at once towards Belgium. Liberal pay and the exhibition of an English passport would, he thought, afford them safe conduct. Their route was accordingly made out by Lyons, Dijon, and Mezières to Dinant; within a few miles of which, stands the Château de Lanville.

The pale and attractive face of the youthful English traveller, resting in the corner of the calèche, had probably some influence in promoting the expedition, and obtaining the courtesy which, even in the midst of the sanguinary struggles still prevailing, everywhere attended their journey. But Madame Duménil, triumphant and overjoyed at what she called the downfall of the Jesuits and the Bourbons (invariably giving precedence to the former), did not resign herself without reluctance to such a lamentable absence of adventure. She

had expected to be arrested, threatened, incarcerated ; and promised herself to suspend, by an electrifying address to the insurgents, the dangers she chose to foresee for herself and her companion. It was mortifying, therefore, to have escaped without let or hindrance.

To compensate for this inglorious impunity, the venerable coquette chose to imagine that, throughout their journey, she had detected the guardianship and interference of an invisible protector. When Miss Balfour arrived at Milan, half insensible from illness, the first physician in the city made his appearance immediately afterwards, unsummoned. In a dangerous pass in the Apennines, which they had been obliged to traverse at nightfall, a man on horseback had preceded the carriage, unbidden, to indicate the road. At Marseilles, their passports had been forced through the forms of the *Mairie*, at a moment when it was invested by the popular party, uproarious

and contumacious; and at Lyons, Dijon, Rheims, where political excitement was at its height, still, some unseen hand and influence caused the populace to make way for them, like the waters of the Red Sea dividing to favour the escape of the Elect People.

All this she had stated to Nannie, who was far too much self-absorbed to give attention to her vagaries. But when, on Madame Duménil's protesting that, on one occasion, she had been on the point of detecting the features of their invisible cavalier, Miss Balfour applied to Hermann for confirmation of the romance, the old man shook his head with a gesture of silent negative, which he had probably learned during his long service in the taciturn house of Zelters and Co.

"The poor, dear, romantic old lady is capable of seeing sylphs and gnomes in chimney-sweeps and milliners' apprentices," observed the Countess, when Miss Balfour, shortly after her arrival at Lanville, entreated her to

check the wild imaginations of her gouvernante.

But even Madame Duménil had other matters to occupy her mind. The discontents of Belgium had already begun to manifest themselves in the most virulent form ; the successes of the Parisian press and populace having stimulated those of Brussels into an outbreak. The head of the unpopular minister, Van Maanen, was loudly demanded ; his house and property were destroyed ; and a complete rupture between the old and new Netherlands was fully expected.

Among the Belgian nobles and burghers dispatched in deputation to the Hague, in the vain hope of obtaining concessions from the archi-Dutch old king in favour of his new subjects, was Count Léonce de Lanville ; selected for the service in the hope that his family connection with the influential Van der Heldes, would obtain him favourable consideration at court.

But this absence, this parting, the first of her married life,—to say nothing of anxieties arising from the prominent position taken by the Courtrai family in the national demonstration, was pregnant with alarm to the young Countess.

Fortunately, one of the few advantages derived by the Prince de Courtrai from his mission to the Papal See, was a dispensation in favour of Sœur Véronique of the Sacré Cœur, enabling her to pass two months of every year in seclusion at Lanville sur Lesse; her health having been injured by the atmosphere of Jette, a spot peculiarly liable to epidemic disorders. A companion was thus provided for Eglantine during the compulsory absence of her husband; and, together, they wept and trembled over the distracted prospects of their country,—the rashness of Léonce,—and the probability of a permanent separation from Clémence and Adrian. Little Eugénie was puzzled to guess what could be the origin of their incessant

tears ; inquiring whether they had been naughty, and *who* had punished them ?

Welcome, indeed, to both would have been the arrival of Nannie and Madame Duménil, to divert their attention from these anxious contemplations, but that the illness of the former added a thorn to their cares. Her endeavours to rouse herself in order to enter into their griefs and grievances, only served to demonstrate her enfeebled condition.

Frequently overcome by the faintness and depression inseparable from low fever, her variations of colour kept them painfully on the alert ; and, a day or two after her arrival, her weakness became so alarming, that medical aid from Dinant—such as it was—was called in ; and the diagnosis of her disorder pronounced at Milan, was confirmed :—“ hectic fever combined with mental disturbance.”

It is true, poor Madame Duménil had done her possible to procure such a verdict. Pre-

vious to the doctor's arrival, she had beset the poor sufferer with significant entreaties not to allow the nature of her emotions to be suspected by those around her.

"It might produce the most injurious results, not only to yourself, but others," said she, with a countenance clouded with mystery. "Consider, my child, what additional pain would await our dear Countess, did she suspect your undue sympathy in the danger of her husband."

"I was in hopes that disgraceful fancy was dismissed from your mind," faltered Miss Balfour, as indignantly as her enervated state would allow. "But let this be the last time, my dear Madame, that it is ever mentioned between us. I have too many real vexations awaiting me, to find strength for fighting with windmills."

Her unusual air of displeasure tended only to confirm the romantic old lady's delusion; and the heightened pulse and flushed cheeks

of the invalid, necessarily served to mislead the Galen of Dinant.

But what a relief to the suffering girl, after these foolish, fluttering confidences, to lie still and silent, comforted by the presence of that kind Sœur Véronique, whose voice, "ever soft and low," was now still more subdued by habitual attendance on the sick. At Jette, her especial duty was nurse-tending in the infirmary; and if humane in her care of the fretful young *pensionnaires* and fractious old sisters, how much more of that gifted Nannie, whom she still loved as dearly as she was permitted to love any thing of this world. Together, they petted the pretty playful child, towards whom Madame Duménil was constantly warning Miss Balfour not to allow her affection to become too apparent. Together, they grieved over the distracted state of the country; together, discoursed of that better land, to which Nannie believed that she was hastening; and where Sœur Véronique, though

grievously disappointed in the hopes she had formed on hearing of Miss Balfour's long sojourn in Rome, was so much better a Christian than Catholic, as to believe that they should meet again.

Every day, a sofa was placed on the terrace ; and while the two friends interchanged their confidences with the same affectionate frankness as beside the spring in the old pine-grove of Hawkshill, Eglantine, restless and unhappy, paced the terrace ; finding a more than willing auditors in Madame Duménil, while she recounted the wrongs of Belgium, and the determination of its enthralled people to profit by the example of France, and expel an unpopular dynasty. Even Sœur Véronique, when appealed to by her sister-in-law, gave evidence on the side of the Liberals ; who had entered into close alliance with the priesthood of Belgium, with the view of ejecting the Protestant king and Court from their ultra-Catholic dominions.

But all three, though eager for the enfranchisement of the kingdom, could not divest themselves of the compunction becoming their sex, on hearing of the outrages which had deluged the streets of Brussels with blood.— Even their own party was now divided against itself; the lowest order of the Belgian people having turned upon the burgher guard organised by the Liberals; in the belief that they were secretly abetting the Orangeists, in order to make good terms for themselves. By letters that reached the young Countess from the Prince de Courtrai, who was so deeply involved in the national struggle as to have been publicly named as the future sovereign of Belgium, it appeared that the opening of the Session of the States General, on the 13th of September, was likely to aggravate rather than disarm the wrath of the mob.

Already the insurrection had extended to Liege; scarcely a day's journey from the tran-

quail valley of the Lesse. And though the vicinity of Lanville to the frontiers of Luxembourg, which, as an hereditary possession of the House of Nassau, remained faithful to the reigning dynasty, exercised some influence over the minds of the peasants, the Dinant doctor brought dispiriting tidings of the investiture of Rochefort by the insurgents.

Nothing but the express commands of Léonce prevented the Countess from joining him at Brussels; whither he had returned from his infructuous journey to the Hague, and installed himself in his family residence. But from its proximity to the palace, the Hotel de Lanville was in imminent jeopardy.

“This city is no longer a safe asylum for women, my poor Eglantine,” wrote the Count. “My only consolation throughout this fearful contest—the end of which it is still impossible to foresee—is the knowledge that you, your child, and our dear sister, are safe in our happy valley of the Lesse. Were you here,

I should be thoroughly unmanned—thoroughly incapable of action : for the decisive blow which is to restore liberty to our country, must soon be struck—or never.”

In his next letter, the Count expressed his satisfaction that his wife had been able to afford shelter, at such a moment, to her dear “Lucille Edgermond ;” entreating her, on no account to sanction Miss Balfour’s departure from Lanville ; the route to England being impassable. At Bruges and Termonde, he said, the citizens were in arms.

“And I, whose only desire is to die at home, and be laid beside my parents,” murmured Nannie to Sœur Véronique, on hearing this alarming announcement. “But I have no one but myself to blame. Of all that has occurred, I was warned before I quitted England.”

The following day, a rumour reached them from Dinant, that Count Frédéric de Mérode, a near relative of the Prince de Courtrai, and

belonging to one of the most ancient Flemish houses, had been shot down while heading a detachment of the burgher guard ; and that the troops of Prince Frederick of Orange, which now invested the city, had obtained the royal sanction to sack and plunder it without reserve.

Grievous was the anguish of that trembling wife and sister during many hours of suspense ! They repaired to the terrace, no longer to enjoy the pleasant breeze, or watch the gradual sinking of the gorgeous autumnal sun ; but to strain their eyes over the landscape, hoping to discern in the horizon the black speck which occasionally appeared in the far-away distance, and gradually became a horseman at full speed, bearing dispatches. But alas ! this was no longer an event of daily occurrence. Horses and men were scarce. All communication of a private nature was now cut off.

They had been spending, in anxious ex-

pectation, the last day of September,—watching, waiting, interrogating each other—only for a renewal of disappointment. A band of lawless ruffians from the Ardennes had that morning entered the courtyard of the château; exhibiting countenances worthy of Claudius Cæsar, or ticket-of-leave men; and demanding money and refreshment, in terms more than peremptory. Asserting that the Count de Lanville was an *employé* of the defeated Orange party, they averred that all good Belgians were entitled to make spoil of his property. A considerable gratuity, and the threat of obtaining military succour from Dinant, had at length determined their departure. But it was more than probable that their success would prompt them to return, probably with reinforcements, certainly with undiminished audacity.

Still, no intelligence from Brussels, to afford to these four isolated, helpless women encouragement or support!—They retreated into

the house as soon as deepening dusk rendered the landscape indistinguishable,—shivering, despairing, sick of their very lives.—

A few minutes after they had installed themselves in the saloon, where a fire and lights were already burning, Sœur Véronique was summoned by one of the upper servants from the room.—But her advice and services were so often sought, both in the household and by the neighbouring poor, that the circumstance excited no attention.

When, however, her return having been delayed more than a quarter of an hour, she made her appearance with a face so ghastly pale under her black coif, that it was terrible to see, Nannie felt convinced that some catastrophe had occurred.

All soon transpired. The agitated nun fell suddenly on her knees before Madame de Lanville, hiding her face in her lap.—Neither of them had breath or courage to speak,—the one to inquire, the other to disclose. Sobs stifled

their utterance. It was Nannie, who, tottering towards them, demanded, in faltering accents, what had happened?—What tidings of evil had reached the château?—

“Tidings of good,” she replied, “as regarded the prospects of their country. The Dutch troops had evacuated Brussels. The Liberals were in possession of the city. But, alas! their dear Léonce was lying at the Hotel de Lanville, severely wounded!—

Eglantine was instantly revived. She had anticipated a still heavier misfortune. In the horror-stricken face of her sister-in-law, she had read that all was over. But Léonce, though wounded, was still alive; and she thanked God as for a mercy.

“Let us go to him; let us start this very moment!” cried she.

“My brother makes it his earnest request that at present we remain here,” remonstrated her sister-in-law. “Prince Frederick, who has retreated no further than Vilvorde, will,

probably, when reinforced, again return to the attack."

"No matter.—Léonce suffering, and perhaps in danger, must not be left among strangers!"

"He is not among strangers, dear Eglantine," pleaded Sœur Véronique. "Your brother is as much with him as his public functions will allow; and Lord Garstang never leaves his room."

"Lord Garstang?"—exclaimed both Madame de Lanville and Nannie.

"His lordship arrived at Brussels, it seems, on a visit to a relative residing in the Parc, during the first collision between the troops and the citizens. Instantly assuming a blouse, he fought by the side of Léonce, till my poor brother was struck down,—assisted in bearing him home,—and has since never quitted his side."

"May God reward him!" cried the Countess. But Nannie could not say "amen." A national cause, she thought, ought not to be embraced on personal grounds.

“How soon can we start?—In what time could we reach Brussels?”—cried Madame de Lanville, addressing the old family servants who, having heard the bad news, now crowded into the room.

“It would be madness, Madame la Comtesse, to attempt departure to night,” answered Honoré, the venerable maître d’hotel. “We must first send off an express to ascertain that posthorses are to be had.—Your own will not convey you further than Huy, which is still in possession of the Orangeists. Even if fresh horses are to be procured there, I doubt their being conceded to the family of the Comte de Lanville.”

“But the *malle-poste*—the *diligence*? No matter in what way we reach the city.”

“All public conveyances have been suspended for the last two days. The *chaussée de Namur* has been torn up by the populace, in order to prevent the transit of cannon.”

“But we *must* go. We *must* reach Brussels,

my good Honoré," cried the Countess, wringing her hands. "Cost what it may, I will make the attempt. A cart and team may be had, if posthorses are refused. When the chaussée fails, we can proceed on foot."

The old man shook his head. His young mistress's will was strong,—far stronger than her powers.

"Better not attempt it to-night, Madame la Comtesse," said he. "Before daylight, my messengers will have returned from Huy, and, I trust, made a clear way for your departure."

But the anxious, impetuous wife was not to be dissuaded.

"Who brought this terrible intelligence?" said she, turning suddenly to her sister-in-law. "Was it by word of mouth?—or had you a letter?—From whom,—from whom?"

"The messenger was a friend; but though a friend, a stranger. He brought a letter of introduction from Lord Garstang, counter-

signed by the surgeons in attendance on our dear Léonce, who certify that, at present, there exists no danger."

"*At present!*—That must have been written this morning.—Before to-morrow, we may have lost him.—And yet, you want me to delay!—But where is the bearer of the letter?—Let me see him at once."

"Perhaps, dear Eglantine, you will visit him in the turret-room," said Sœur Véronique, evidently embarrassed. "The gentleman, who made his way here with much difficulty and much fatigue, is taking refreshment."

The Countess had already left the room,—too eager to wait for explanations. The servants had previously disappeared. Only Madame Duménil, Nannie, and Sœur Véronique, remained.

"With such grief as hers, poor soul, it is useless to contend," observed the latter.—
"But for two helpless women and a child to force their passage through the troops, which

still invest the city, would be, indeed, a mad attempt!"—

"Two helpless women?" interrupted Miss Balfour. "Surely you do not intend, *chère Sœur*, to leave me here, solitary and unprotected?—Am I not to accompany you to Brussels?"

"Would it be wise? Would it be well? We brave the dangers of a beleaguered city, to attend upon a husband and a brother. It is our privilege; it is our duty. But you, dear friend, in infirm health, disqualified to meet fatigue or danger, and with no justifying motive for the attempt, had far better remain at Lanville."

"But should the chateâu be attacked, as but yesterday you thought only too probable?"

"There is a secret passage through the rocks, as far as the caverns of Han, known only to the heads of the house as a sure retreat in times of danger. Before our departure, I

will myself entrust to old Hermann the key and the clue."

Miss Balfour covered her face with her hands. That such precautions should be needful, was, in her enfeebled state, as a sentence of death.

"Let me go with you," said she, suddenly throwing her arms round the neck of the gentle nun. "With you, I should fear nothing. —I *cannot* remain here."

"But you do not reflect, my dear child," interrupted Madame Duménil, who had just re-entered the room, after imbibing an infusion of orange-flower-water, sufficient to compose the hysterics of a whole boarding-school—"you do not reflect on the bad effect it would have for you to be braving brigades of Dutch dragoons, to attend the sick-bed of the Comte de Lanville!—Such rash heroism would be interpreted by the world in the most cruel manner. Consider all that has been whispered on the subject."

“Whispers, I have already told you, I despise!” cried Nannie, with glowing spirit. “Why am I to remain here—wretched—ailing—unprotected,—in deference to the tyranny of society?”

“To relieve the anxiety of your attached friends,” interposed the gentle voice of one who, unobserved, had entered the room, and approached the couch on which Miss Balfour was reposing ; — a gentle voice which, though three years had elapsed since she heard it last, she could not but instantly recognise as that of—her cousin Ely !—

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